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ALMACK'S

A NOVEL.

" Nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

SECOND EDITION.

VOL. III.

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ALMACK'S REVISITED.

CHAPTER I.

THE Earl of Alderney, who had always shewn great partiality for Herbert, was still in the flower of his age: he was descended from a race of ancient and proud nobility, and his illustrious ancestors had in him a noble representative of their virtuous and honourable name. He had been as much remarked in the world for his handsome person and distinguished figure, as he was proverbial for the grace, elegance, and polished urbanity of his manners. His taste had become the standard upon which every article, from a hair-brush to a *vis-à-vis*, or from a bridle to

an opera-hat, had been measured and christened: to be considered like Lord Alderney, either in appearance or bearing, was a feather in a man's cap, which at once stamped him as a gentleman, *par excellence*, and would almost suffice to open for him the doors of the first houses, as well as the hearts of their fairest inmates, with the talismanic facility of "Sesami!" His Lordship's politics were decidedly those of the weaker party (numerically speaking) in the Senate. His opinions, however, on this point, as well as his whole conduct in the affairs of life, were strictly conscientious and honourable. His elevated rank and splendid fortune placed him above all sordid and mercenary temptations; whilst his feelings were too noble to admit his being influenced by any other views, than those which he considered for the good of his country. It is true, he had never put himself forward, or taken that lead in public affairs, which his rank, talents, and influence, might have justified; but whenever he did rise in

his place, his observations were listened to with great attention and respect by both sides of the House; and were as remarkable for their justice, moderation, and good sense, as his language for its purity and mildness.

Her Ladyship, who had been equally distinguished for her personal charms, and was indeed still considered one of the handsomest women in England, was at the very summit of fashion, the arbitress of ton, and *Coryphée* of London arrangements: her balls, parties, dinners, and equipage; her hats, caps, and pelisses, were at once the envy of the women, the glory of Mesdames Herbert and Marradin, and the pride and admiration of all the young men in town. Not content, however, with this decided pre-eminence, this feminine triumph over her contemporaries in the world, Lady Alderney's highest ambition was to outlive the ephemeral columns of the Morning Post. The immortal names of Lady Russel, De Stael, De Chatélet, Catherine, and others

of that bright galaxy of distinguished women, were always present to her imagination, and gave excitement to her ambition. She sighed in her soul to be handed down to posterity in the "historic quarto," editing by one of the learned of her own sex, not only as the leader of a party, but as the nucleus around which the wit, talents, and erudition of her day, clustered like bees around the honey-dripping eglantine. She would have renounced not only the pleasures of life, but even existence itself without a tear, if she could have been assured of again reviving, in the shape of a large paper copy of octavo Memoirs, edited by some amphibious Blue, under the auspices of an erudite and speculative publisher. Nothing, however, so much gratified her vanity, or flattered her imagination, as the idea of being considered by the world as a person having a predominating influence over the politics of the day. If any hungry, dinner-dancing wag had the art to persuade her (a matter not by any means difficult) that minis-

ters had determined to renounce some proposed resolution upon their discovering the decided opposition which she had declared to the measure, he was certain to find a welcome cover laid for him every day in Grosvenor Square, and a room always at his disposal at Beau-Sejour. To do her justice, however, she was not deficient in talent: if she wanted strength of mind, sound judgment, and extensive information, she made amends for the defalcation by great quickness, indefatigable industry, and inordinate violence in her ideas: difference of opinion could not proceed from error of judgment, or be the result of conscience or integrity; it must have sprung either from vice, interest, or imbecility: and if ever an individual had ventured to give his vote in either House in opposition to her veto, *adio* Grosvenor Square, farewell Almack's; and indeed, were it not for fear of her own pretty neck, she would have looked him to death with her beautiful eyes, or desired her coachman to drive the

fastest pair of greys in London over his recreant body.

Lord Dossington differed as much in personal appearance and manners from his noble host, as he coincided in the virulence of his political opinions with Lady Alderney. These opinions he carried to the extreme: all crowned heads and princes, except that of the martyr Napoleon, were to him as odious as a bad dinner, or a deuce ace at Hazard; he never would permit his wife or daughters to attempt the air of a Court, either for their amusement, or for the benefit of their matrimonial speculations, in which latter, they had, unfortunately, not been too successful. His hatred for the simple emblem of monarchy was as violent as that of a Moslem for a Christian's round hat and beardless jaw; indeed, he had once refused a licence to a publican, because he sold his ale under the auspices of the "Crown and Sceptre;" and refused to pay his son's tailor's bill, because the man's name chanced to be "George

King;"—in short, he carried his antipathy to royalty to such extravagant lengths, that, although he was indefatigable in attending to his parliamentary duties, nothing could induce him to go down to the House on the first or last day of the session, lest his liberal spirit should be contaminated by even hearing his Majesty's commission read from the throne, in the event of the monarch not appearing there in person! On all occasions, right or wrong, whether for the increase or diminution of taxes; on all questions touching the army, navy, church, or civil list; on beer, corn, salt, or spring-gun bills: if the proposal emanated from ministers, his Lordship's "Nay" was sure to be recorded in the minority. Nature, in return for the parsimony which she had exhibited in the embellishment of his person, had been extremely liberal in the portion of talent with which she had stored his head. His sarcastic, though humorous wit; his biting, though not illiberal remarks, were the amusement and dread, alike of friends or

foes. Few were bold enough to cope with him in epigrammatic skirmishing, and woe betide the rash individual who attempted a retort, which generally concluded in bringing down redoubled laughter and castigation upon his devoted head! In his own family he was a very "*Diable à quatre.*" Men, women, girls, and boys, down to the last *marmiton* in the offices, trembled at his laconic but piercing sting. He was a successful player, an eminent whip, and his good taste in the mysteries of the kitchen was exemplified by giving the best dinners in London: his opinions in matters of this kind were paramount, and his discrimination was reduced by intense study and frequent practice to such extreme nicety and perfection, that he once gained a large wager by betting that he would drive in his curricle by Sir Gore Cramwell's house, and by merely sniffing the fumes which arose from the area, discover and enumerate the nature and numbers of the different *plâts* then under process of con-

coction in the Baronet's "*batterie de cuisine.*"

Lady Dossington, really a very good kind of little woman, *au fond*, was descended, in all the glory of sixteen unsullied quarters from one of the most ancient families in England. But vain of her birth as a Brahmin of his caste, and prouder of her rank than a three-tailed Pacha, her Ladyship was, however, remarkable for no particular talents or cleverness: she employed her time, like Norval's father, in "increasing her store, and keeping her four or five daughters at home," in considerable order and subordination.

She had been in her day a pretty woman, though, unfortunately, in this peculiarity, her daughters took the liberty of differing with her considerably, as they all in succession, more or less, resembled their father, both in appearance and disposition. Lady Dossington had the utmost horror for sentiment or romance. She considered feeling, such a useless article in the human composition, and

mutual affection so utterly needless in any arrangement for the establishment of her daughters, that they were strictly forbidden ever to pronounce the word "love," even in their prayers; and she once turned off a governess, because she happened to catch her one day declining with her daughter the verb "aimer," in the subjunctive mood. Novels—oh the horror!—were deemed, under every pain and penalty beyond redemption, contraband; in fact, whatever books the girls were permitted to peruse, previously underwent a strict examination, and every page allusive to the forbidden subject was carefully pasted down by her Ladyship's own hand.

Her lessons, or some other cause, had succeeded so well, that year after year rolled on, and still the Lady Bossvilles were seen dancing in all the correctness of unshackled affections and single blessedness. They had commenced their speculations with Dukedoms, descended to Marquisites, then lowered their views to Earldoms; and, in short, after

augmenting the heraldic balls till they were too numerous to be borne on any escutcheon, they had reduced their standard to the list of Baronets, even looked with less horror on the numerous K. C. B.'s, and evinced no disgust at the indefinite and every-day squires; indeed, they had now received sealed orders from their mother to commence (under certain restrictions) immediate operations upon Herbert—a command which the girls were not backward in obeying, for nature, in despite of all rules, will speak in favour of a good-looking person. One of them, indeed (Lady Susan), unhappily for herself, and in despite of the good precepts of her mother, had languished for several years over the first person, present, perfect, and future of the proscribed verb,—in short, had fallen desperately in love with the unsuspecting Herbert.

I must now as rapidly as possible pass over the remaining personages. Lord Dumheight was remarkable for nothing but his pompous dulness and unbending ignorance

The evolutions of his ideas were bounded by the Racing Calendar, with now and then an extraordinary excursion into the Sporting Magazine: talk on what subject you would, his Lordship was certain to bring you round in the end to his stable, and in this only did he ever evince any ingenuity. Mention the name of a cavalry officer who had distinguished himself in the field, he would contrive to introduce Buckle winning a race on some bad horse, with the odds on the field five to one against him; if the conversation fell on the style of some particular author, he would reply, by asking if you admired the style of Nimrod's observations on the staggers; —in short, he was the most consummate bore, and half an hour's *tête-à-tête* would have disgusted the facetious Dean himself with his favourite Houyhnhnms; but as heir to a higher title and great fortune, he was considered by Lady Dossington a very proper person for her daughters to talk to; moreover, she felt well-assured there could be no danger of their

falling in love with him, as, like all shallow, proud men, he was afraid of being taken in, and therefore piqued himself upon jockeying her Ladyship, as well as many others who had attempted the same conquest.

Hoaxworth was the very reverse of the former young nobleman,—he was a species of *ci-devant jeune homme*. He had been much on the Continent; and if a museum of lions, towers, elephants, saints, and eagles, represented by so many different pieces of particoloured ribbon, could be taken as a criterion, he must have done all the states of Europe good service. The style of his dress was eccentric in the extreme; his great aim was to be looked at (as it is called) "General Prince, Donners Bluten," or some other Hyrcanian hero. Nothing had ever flattered him more, than when Sir Harry Sneerwell, meeting him in the street, and pretending not to know him, exclaimed with well-feigned surprise, "Can it be possible! my dear Prince, how long have you been in England?" How-

ever, under this cloak of nonsense and coxcombry, Colonel Hoaxworth concealed a deep, shrewd, and calculating head. Cold-hearted and selfish beyond all measure, he considered all common feelings of delicacy, all ties of friendship, as utterly ridiculous in a man of the world, when his own interests, personal or pecuniary, were at stake: money was his idol, and if he could obtain ten pounds by conveying a snuff-box, a piece of Sevre, or a *soi-disant* original picture, from his own cabinet into the possession of a friend, he would not scruple to employ means that would have made the keenest auctioneers in London blush at their comparative want of ingenuity. His maxim was,

"Get money, money still:
And let virtue follow as it will."

Few men, however, were better informed, more agreeable, or gentlemanly; and had it been possible to rely on his professions or actions, he would have formed as amiable as he was an agreeable member of society.

Mr. Muddiford was a good kind of man, with just enough sense to enable him to steer his sluggish course undistinguished through life. The current of his imagination flowed with sufficient vivacity to free it from the green duckweed which choked the stagnant puddlehead of Lord Dumheight; and as he voted on the right side, was inoffensive and harmless, and, above all, laughed at every joke, whether he understood it or not, he was even suffered by Lady Alderney herself; though she had been somewhat piqued at his decided refusal to try a warm bath, as a recipe for a rheumatic attack. He was, what Sir Harry Sneerwell called, at least, the cleanest man in the world.

The Baronet was, by-the-bye, one of the wits of the day, and a man of considerable talent and information, but devoted to a joke, and ready to sacrifice every thing for a *bon-mot;* his witticisms and *jeux-d'esprit* might, if collected, have formed an appendix to Joseph Miller, from whose lucubrations, it

must be confessed, he was often wont (in fits of absence) to borrow some of his happiest thoughts, a crime of which he constantly accused his friend, Sir James Epsom. This gentleman was a good-natured and kind-hearted man, full of a certain sort of humour, bordering upon coarseness; but being a privileged person, he was permitted to say almost any thing, and rarely failed, by his mirthful manner and remarks, to extract a smile from the primmest prude or the most stately divine. Good living and field-sports were the principal pursuits of his life: he had been many years one of the most honourable and successful members of the turf. For his wife's talents he had the most consummate veneration, and looked upon her as little inferior to Madame de Stael herself; from idleness, or some other cause, he had seldom troubled the House (of which he was a member) with his conceptions, except upon some extraordinary occasion, when sporting or the interests of the brute creation were at stake:

then, indeed, Lady Maria put forth all her historical and classical lore, and composed for him orations, which he merely had the trouble to repeat. Once, when it was proposed by some member to put a tax on cats, and render it unlawful to set rat-traps, or place poison in any pantry, larder, cupboard, or store-room, without the words "rat-trap," or "poison," being painted in large letters over the door or window, her Ladyship, through the medium of her husband, gave the house a specimen of her forensic oratory, of which I can only give a part from memory, as the reporters informed the public with regret, that Sir James's speech was inaudible in the gallery, in consequence of the House, as well as the Speaker himself, being, from some unknown cause, convulsed with laughter during its delivery.

"Sir," said he, "having the honour to appertain to that class of individuals distinguished in this House under the fruitful appellation of Country Gentlemen, or, as we

have been termed in 'another place,' the Miller and his Men, I should feel that I were ill fulfilling the duty which I owe to my constituents (he represented a most decayed borough), were I to content myself with giving a silent dissent to the measure proposed by the honourable member for Puddletown. This, Sir, is a question so fraught with importance to the agricultural, as well as the commercial interests of this great and flourishing nation, that I must request the indulgence of the House, if, at this late hour, I venture to offer a few observations upon this most important subject. When I call to mind Magna Charta, that great bulwark of our liberties, only to be rivalled by the Break-water at Plymouth—when I remember the victories of our ancestors on the plains of Cressy and Agincourt—when the shades of Hampden, Sidney, and Russel speak from the silent tomb the voice of warning—when the glorious Resurrection—Restoration I mean—" [*shouts of laughter*] " is fresh in my

recollection, and the Edict of Nantes not forgotten;—in short, when I recall to mind the immortal death of Nelson, and the defeat of the Spanish Armada, I cannot but implore this House to pause ere it sanctions by its vote the *cat*astrophic" [*hear, hear! and laughter*] "proposition of the honourable gentleman! What! shall the golden fruits of Ceres be reaped in vain? shall the fragrant treasures of the dairy curdle to no purpose? shall the laborious peasant moisten with the sweat of his brow the fruitful soil? shall he expend the vigour of his sinewy arm for no other end but to gorge the irrational [*hear! hear!*] objects of the honourable member's exaggerated philanthropy? Shall we, by adopting this measure, bring famine on the land, and ruin to the Constitution? What! shall our ears no longer be enlivened with the truly British cry of 'Cats' meat!' so dear to the mature and matronly maiden ladies of the land? Shall we, by depriving this respected class of the purring smiles of their feline fa-

vourites, tear from them the small solace which still cheers the gloomy evening of their days, and send their 'gray hairs in solitude to the tomb?' Are we a musical nation? shall fiddle-strings no longer flourish, and our granaries be abandoned without a scratch to their granivorous foe? Justice forbid!!" But unfortunately my memory will furnish me with no more of this clever speech, and I must hasten to say a few words of Lady Maria. Her Ladyship, whose conversation, Sneerwell said, had more of Epsom than Attic salt in it, was a compound of all the shreds and fragments in the whole catalogue of sciences; every art, study, and invention, from phrenology down to pedecurism, from geology to genealogy, from astronomy to mineralogy, and from music to riding, had been tried in its turn, and her mind was become exactly like a cullender or funnel, which permits the finer particles to pass through, and retains nothing but the grosser parts. Her learning was the terror of the whole race

of Literati, and your philosopher would rather have met with the Numean Lion, or Caledonian Boar himself, than be caught by her Ladyship, who, in despite of several years' labour, never had been enabled to convince any one but her husband, that, instead of being a *savante*, she was an *ultra-precieuse*.

As the cousins arrived just in time to dress for dinner, they were immediately ushered to their apartments, with the usual ceremony, by the groom-of-the-chambers. And scarcely were the party assembled in the drawing-room, and the few detestable minutes which precede dinner elapsed, during which men suffer so much from not being comfortably settled into their neckcloths, and women are as little at ease, from their dresses not having subsided into their proper place, or from their gloves tearing a little above their thumbs;—when the ancient *maître-d'hôtel*, with his well-powdered *ailes de pigeon*, and his bow, which would have done honour to the *vieille cour*, entered to announce the welcome "*Madame la Comtesse, vous êtes servie.*"

During the first operation on the introductory soup and fish, and the *avant-courier* glass of Madeira or Sherry, little, as usual, was said: however, upon the disclosure of the leading *entrées*, a few words were hazarded here and there, whilst sundry references on the merits of different *plâts* were made to Lord Dossington, who sat with the neatly written *programme* of the dinner by his side, like a skilful general examining the "*state*" of an enemy's army.

"Dossington, let me recommend you some of this *suprême de volaille;* pray try some of these *filets de lapereaus, en turban;* shall I send you some of this *salmi de perdreux au truffes?*"

His Lordship gave his opinion on every dish, in the most artist-like manner; talked of a "*soupçon*" more of Tarragon, or an "*idée*" more of garlic being only wanted to render this or that sauce perfection itself.

As the guests began to satisfy the first cravings of appetite, the conversation took a more general turn. Herbert, who had not per-

ceived Lady Susan Bossville's little manœuvres, found himself placed between her Ladyship and Lady Maria Epsom. After discussing with the former the never ending topic of Almack's, the divine Pasta, and terrestrial Stephens, and offering some criticisms on the absurdity of the latter always singing her Northern airs in a harsh and unintelligible *patois* musical Scotch, when both the melody and metre would, perhaps, be improved by being given in pure English, he asked her Ladyship if she had ever been in Scotland. "Oh, yes!" was the reply; "Mamma never allows Papa to go any where without her; and as he does not think it correct to leave us alone, we always accompany him on his grouse-shooting expeditions."

"I envy you then," said Herbert, "the pleasure you must have had in the enjoyment of the beauties and grandeur of Scotch scenery,—its romantic glens, its splendid lakes, and noble mountains, embellished by the picturesque costume of the Highlanders."

"Oh, we never see much of the country when we go," answered his fair neighbour: "in the first place, it always rains, and one must either catch cold out of doors, or die of *ennui* in the house; then the lairds are such very vulgar men, dance nothing but odious reels, look so savage with their dirks and claymores, and smell so horribly of whiskey that they quite disgust one—besides, mamma thinks their costume very indelicate!"

"At all events," replied Herbert, "the pleasure of reading the Scotch novels amidst the scenes which their inimitable author has pourtrayed with such romantic beauty, such force of language, and natural simplicity, must have consoled you for the whiskey-fragrant lairds, and the want of good waltzers."

"We never read these kind of books, Mr. Milton," exclaimed Lady Susan; "we hate all trashy, sentimental novels," loud enough for Lady Dossington to hear her; and then added, in a sort of *sotto voce*, "but once I met with some extracts from one of them in a re-

view which mamma had forgotten to paste down."

"Did not that give you an inclination to be better acquainted with the author's works?" inquired Herbert.

"Why, I confess," answered Lady Susan, "though mamma says it's very silly and ridiculous, and quite out of one's sphere of life, to think about what vulgar people call love, yet, do you know, it must be very agreeable and somewhat original, to be loved quite for one's self, and not for papa's dinners, or mamma's Almack's tickets."

"But the fact is," replied Herbert, "this Love is a very selfish individual, and requires to be repaid for his services; therefore, if you will always play the cruel, at least the world says so, you must not expect that the little god will continue to hover over you."

"It is not our faults, I assure you," rejoined Lady Susan; "we are absolutely forbidden to think of love, or to love any thing or any body, except papa and my brothers,

and the great dog. But, in despite of that, Mr. Milton, I feel that one cannot be entirely happy without it, and we are never so." Then starting with surprise at her own unusual candour, Lady Susan added, "But, pray do not tell mamma about my nonsense."

Here they were interrupted by Lady Maria Epsom, who exclaimed, "By-the-bye, talking of Scotland, Mr. Milton, have you read Dr. M'Grampian's charming account of his ingenious experiments on mephitic acid carbonated gas? It's very clever, and uncommonly simple."

"So I should imagine, from the title," replied her victim, lifting up the whites of his eyes in an agony.

"Nothing can be more so," continued her Ladyship. "Indeed, the Professor's, publications are so clear, and so devoid of all technical galamathias, that they are perfectly intelligible even to us poor, weak-minded, ignorant women!"

Here Herbert attempted to slip in a very

unwilling compliment, but her Ladyship prevented him, by saying, "Now, now! I know what you were going to say, but I detest flattery, so spare your compliment:" and then continued—"The doctor proves, beyond all doubt, that many people, Mr. Muddiford for instance, if they were to approach their faces too near a candle, would infallibly ignite and explode, as the poor men are burned in the mines, were it not that Nature has placed the larynx at the foot of the tybia, to act as a kind of ventilator to the system. Thus, a current of air is caused to circulate round the lungs, the phlogistic matter is deprived of its gaseous qualities, the caloric miasma is rendered innocuous to the human frame, and the carbonic particles neutralized and deprived of their combustible properties."

"Nothing *can* be more clear," groaned Herbert, wishing from his heart, that Nature had forgotten to furnish her Ladyship with one of the Professor's ventilators.

"I knew you would say so," replied his

tormentor; "any one may comprehend so simple a thing."

Here Sir Harry Sneerwell requested Lady Maria "would do him the honour of taking a glass of Champagne."

"With great pleasure," answered her Ladyship; and, before the glass had reached her lips, asked Sir Harry if he did not think Captain Donald Hellibore a very agreeable person? "You know him, of course?"

"Yes," replied the Baronet, "I do; and whenever I suffer from insomnie, always beg him to do me the favour of talking to me for a few minutes."

"Oh, you are so very severe!" retorted the would-be *Blue*. "But, apropos! you must admire his Treatise on the Gravity of Fluids?"

"I never found gravity in any fluid, except water," joked out Lord Dossington.

"Nor any thing serious in Champagne, save paying for it," added Sir Harry.

"You are too bad: you know I hate a pun, and you are both in league against me."

Then again fixing Herbert, Lady Maria said, "Of course, you know Hellibore?"

"Yes," answered he; "but I confess, with due humility, that he is the most tedious, self-conceited *bore* I ever met with."

"Bore!" exclaimed Lady Maria, "he's delightful! He's by far the most distinguished officer in the navy. No one ever wrote so much;—his voyage to the undiscovered islands of Cock-a-doodle-do-dos is interesting beyond measure. Tedious! why, it's so amusing, I never liked any book so much. He proves, to my satisfaction completely, that the Gaels, the Basques, and those islanders, directly sprung from the alluvial deposit, from which the whole world was peopled after the Deluge. They are the rectilineal and immediate descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japhet. His vocabulary of the Cock-a-doodle-do-dos tongue, contains a great number of Basque and Gaelic words; some, indeed, are from Erse, which, allowing for the many changes and corruptions produced

by the lapse of ages, and other causes, must have been the identical idiom of the ark. In fact, there is no doubt that Noah and his family all spoke the pure Cock-a-doodle-do-dos, as the Romans spoke the pure Latin now corrupted into Italian."

"Well," said Herbert, "from what you say, I cannot but allow he must be a man of great talent; but surely you do not call him gentlemanly?"

"Oh, you know one always forgets the manner in learned people, we only look to the matter; but I thought him interesting. Do you know, when he first arrived—(I always invite all persons of merit to my house) —from the habit of living so much with the first society, and with the savans of the islands, he had adopted their customs, would only sit cross-legged on a chair, and ate his dinner with two walking-sticks, instead of a knife and fork!"

"You quite forget, Maria, his crowing like a cock, and flapping his hand on his side,

when he threw himself on the *chaise longue*, by old Miss Barbara Blackthorn?" said Sir James with a laugh.

"Sir James, I wish you would not be so absurd!" said her Ladyship; "you think every man a goose who does not shoot or hunt.

Colonel Hoaxworth now happening to produce a very handsome gold snuff-box, Lady Alderney requested to look at it.

"Where did you get this? it is beautiful!" exclaimed her Ladyship.

"Yes," replied the Colonel, "it is rather a good thing; but I assure you, that its intrinsic value is trifling, in comparison with the interesting historical facts attached to it."

"Pray tell us what fair French Countess or German Princess gave it to you? I am sure there must be a miniature concealed—will you permit me to look?" demanded Lady Alderney: then opening the double lid, she discovered the portrait of a beautiful person, in the costume of the fifteenth century.

After a little pressing, the gallant officer said, "The fact is, the box belonged to the celebrated Duke of Orleans, afterwards Louis XI. and the miniature is the portrait of the Duchess Anne de Bretagne, who, though affianced to Maximilian of Hungary, afterwards married Charles the VIIIth of France. The box was given by Anne to the Duke, with whom she was desperately enamoured, when he was sent to Rennes by Charles, as his ambassador, to demand her hand in marriage."

"It is all a hoax!" whispered Sir Harry to Lord Dossington. "I'll bet a hundred to one, that Mension, of the Palais Royal, painted the portrait, and that the box was made at Hamlet's within the last six months!"

"Let us hear how it came into your possession," said Lady Alderney, "I beg!"

"Alfred Milton," replied the Colonel (with a very slight twinkle of one eye, directed at the former), "was with me when I purchased it from the old Marquess de Palsangua, who

bought it by an extraordinary chance from the executioner who guillotined Robespierre, in whose pocket it happened to be when he was led to the scaffold!"

"How very shocking!" exclaimed all the Lady Bossvilles. "But what motive induced the Marquess, with an odd name, to purchase a memento of Robespierre?" inquired Lady Dossington.

"Oh!" replied the Colonel, with the greatest gravity, "the Marquess—poor fellow! I had a great regard for that old man" (and he endeavoured to squeeze a tear into his eye),—"had been Chamberlain to Marie Antoinette, from whose cabinet the box was plundered; and, of course, any relic of the unfortunate Queen was invaluable to him."

Sir James, who knew the Colonel's talents, and was determined to push his powers of improvisation as far as he could, now exclaimed from the other end of the table, "But, I say, Hoaxworth, if the old boy was so attached to the family treasure, how the

deuce did you contrive to induce him to part with it?"

"Reduced by the Revolution to the utmost misery, his wife and himself being obliged to earn a scanty subsistence by shaving poodle-dogs on the Pont Neuf, he was at last driven to the necessity of disposing of the box, and thus it came into my possession!"—Then very quietly taking a pinch of snuff, and looking significantly over his inverted thumb at Alfred, he deposited the historic relic (which, in fact, had not been a fortnight out of Mr. Kitchen's hands) in his pocket.

Here Lady Dossington, addressing Lady Alderney, said, "Apropos of the Revolution! how does the ladies' subscription for a cenotaph to the memory of Napoleon succeed?"

"Very well," answered the fair hostess, "considering the opposition that several foolish people made to it, and, above all, that odious paper, 'John Bull,' as I am *told*: however, I am determined not a soul shall

ever put their foot into my house, unless they choose to subscribe. I have no idea of people refusing their paltry five pounds to raise a monument to that great man, when they do not scruple to give hundreds for an absurd and preposterous statue to the *gentleman* who had the good fortune to oppose the brave troops treacherously sold to him!"

"Sold!" exclaimed Herbert with some warmth, being scarcely able to repress his indignation at her Ladyship's extraordinary tirade; "surely you must allow us, poor soldiers, and the great captain who commanded us, some little merit on the occasion? But, in fact, your Ladyship is very right, for we did indeed purchase our victory, and with the same coin by which we drove those invincibles from the walls of Lisbon to the gates of Toulouse—our blood and bayonets!"

"Oh! I forgot you were a soldier, Colonel Milton;—of course, I admit, that you all fought very well; but I have heard, not only from Count Fanfaron and Monsieur de la

Gasconade, who were aid-de-camps to the Emperor, but from all *well*-informed Frenchmen, that it was morally impossible that a French army could ever be beaten, unless treachery existed somewhere."

Here Sir Harry interrupted Lady Alderney, by saying, "Talking of Napoleon—some very curious facts, relative to his escape from Egypt, have lately been communicated to me, by a gentleman who is the depositary of some unpublished cypher letters from the great Nelson to a lady."

"Oh, my dear Sir Harry! you will do me the greatest favour, if you will relate them!" exclaimed Lady Maria. "Some friends of mine, those dear, clever creatures, the Miss Blackthorns, are going to edite a Life of Hortense, from original papers, and, of course, any inedite anecdote of the Emperor will be invaluable to them."

Sir Harry, with the most serious face (having first whispered Lady Alderney), then went on: —"It is not generally known that

Bonaparte was on board the French fleet at the Nile, or that he quitted the Admiral's ship a few minutes before it blew up. This, however, was the case. Nelson, who had discovered this fact, gave chase to the remnant of the enemy's fleet, which, however, succeeded in making its escape, and took refuge under the protection of the guns of the Sultan's Kiosque near Constantinople. In despite, however, of this immensely strong position, the brave Nelson resolved to attack them immediately on his discovering their intention; but, upon attempting to enter the Dardanelles, his Lordship found that the enemy had thrown up a strong barrier across the Straits—"

Lady Maria here exclaimed—"What! from Sestos to Abydos? how very interesting! what a curious coincidence! on the identical spot where Xerxes threw his suspension-bridge across the Hellespont. You know, Sir Harry, that there is no doubt we owe the invention of chain-piers entirely to the chief-engineer of the Persian army!"

There is no knowing how long her Ladyship might have continued, had not Sir Harry interrupted her with—"Exactly! nothing can be more certain, Diodorus Siculus, Pliny, and others mention it; and in corroboration of what you say, I have heard from a gentleman who is now employed in unrolling and decyphering the manuscripts that were saved from the conflagration of the Alexandrian Library, that he has discovered the plans and explanations of the bridge itself. However, to my story:—Lord Nelson, upon finding it impossible to penetrate this formidable barrier, immediately called a council of war, and it was determined to embark the whole of the ships' companies in the boats of the fleet, and to leave the vessels at anchor in the care of the stewards of each man-of-war."

Lord Dumheight here requested to know the use of stewards on board ship.

"Why, to take care of them through the Portland Race," answered Sir James Epsom.

"Portland races!" exclaimed his Lord-

ship; "that's something quite new; why they are not down in the list."

"Pray do not interrupt Sir Harry, my dear Epsom! I die to hear about the Emperor's escape."

"Well, the boats being manned, Lord Nelson gave orders to steer directly across the Isthmus of Suez, and by gaining the weather-gage of the coast of Labrador, and keeping Gallapagos well on his lee-bow, he succeeded in entering the Black Sea, without being discovered by the enemy's fleet, and completely turned their position. Immediately the signal for boarding was hoisted, the boats pushed forward in the most gallant style, and in less than twenty minutes every ship of the enemy's fleet struck their colours; and Napoleon himself would have been captured, had he not thrown himself into a fire-ship, from whence he mounted—"

"There!" said Lord Dumheight, nodding his head, "now that proves the necessity of being well-mounted;—there is nothing, you may rely upon it, like a good horse."

"I beg your Lordship's pardon," replied Sir Harry, "it happened to be a dromedary; therefore, the Emperor, mounting Berthier behind him, rode without halting night or day until he reached Venice, whence we all know he escaped to Frejus, and arrived in perfect safety at Paris; and so great was Bonaparte's affection for the animal to which he owed his escape, that he ordered it to be taken care of at the Jardin des Plantes, and when it died, stuffed and placed in the Museum."

"By-the-bye," observed Lord Dossington, "it was a very pretty compliment, on the part of our minister, to send a gentleman to take care of him at Elba, whose name might also remind him of his favourite!"

Lady Maria, whose geography, upon which she most particularly piqued herself, had been so completely absorbed in her anxiety to hear the issue of the Emperor's adventure, now began to recollect the extraordinary course by which Sir Harry had taken the liberty to despatch Lord Nelson in pursuit of the enemy: upon looking around, she

saw every face except Lord Dumheight's convulsed with laughter; and when she found herself the object of Sir Harry's joke, her anger knew no bounds: fortunately, however, Lady Alderney foresaw the gathering storm, and before it had time to explode, put on her gloves, arranged her bracelets, and then, with the usual inclination of the person right and left, proposed to adjourn to the drawing-room, where in a short time they were followed by the rest of the party; her Ladyship having wisely induced Lord Alderney to abolish that heathenish custom of the men remaining for hours by themselves until they forget the short journey to their mouths, drinking and asking for more claret until their voices become inarticulate.

The evening passed, as evenings are usually wont to do in the country, with the assistance of cards, music, politics, and scandal, except during the hunting season, and then, Heaven have mercy on the women who are not hippogriffs! or on the man who is not acquainted

with every horse, dog, coppice, and bullfinch in the three hunts, or who cannot quote Nimrod by the ell!

Lord Dossington, who was extremely proud of his daughters' proficiency on the piano, upon which instrument they could not be excelled by any of Messieurs Scappa's or Kalkebrenner's most rapid pupils, either in velocity of execution, brilliancy of touch, or want of feeling, called Lady Susan, and desired her to use her influence with Herbert, to induce him to sing. The request was no sooner made than complied with, and he good-naturedly advanced to the instrument, without any of that absurd affectation and reluctance which amateur singers, especially men, generally employ on such occasions; he had the good taste to like singing, and the honesty to confess it.

Accompanied by Lady Susan, he sang several beautiful selections from Rossini and Zingarelli, and gave two or three little Venetian airs, which he had learned from Miss

Manby, with such sweetness and feeling, that tears almost filled the eyes of Lady Susan, who, to do her justice, never accompanied so well, and this, because she was thinking of Herbert, and not endeavouring to shine herself. Herbert had one advantage when singing, and that a very considerable one, which was, that his countenance became animated and impassioned by the very notes which he produced. Every one was enthusiastic in their praise of his talents, and his fair assistant's service; and Lord Dossington was not a little pleased to hear Colonel Milton express his admiration of Lady Susan's method, in the most unqualified terms, though, in fact, nothing in general can be more disagreeable than this species of brilliant accompaniment, where the voice is only considered as an accessory, and where the accompanier, without regarding the taste, feeling, compass, or style of the singer, the pathos of the air, or sense of the words, either mechanically runs through the pre-

scribed solemnity of the adagio, with the one two three precision of the metronome, or rattles away without mercy through the allegro whenever an occasion presents itself for the luxuriant *ad libitum* introduction of turns, variations, and embellishments.

Herbert, on retiring from the piano, endeavoured to say very civil things to Lady Susan on one side, and to listen to Lady Maria Epsom on the other; the latter, apropos of Venetian airs, had mounted on the horses of St. Mark, then descended into a gondola on the Adriatic, and, after marrying the Doge, took an excursion to Herculaneum, where she seated herself in the amphitheatre.

In the mean time, Lady Dossington had drawn Alfred into a corner, under the pretence of an *ecarté*. After a few revolutions of the usual "*je vous prie de jouer*," "*je marque le roi*," "*j'ai la vole*," and sundry other technicalities, which it would be a great solecism in good-breeding even to pronounce in plain English, at length addressed Alfred with,

"Mr. Milton, I wish to ask you a few questions about your cousin, and I flatter myself, from what I am going to say, that you will not only feel the full extent of confidence which I place in you, but the high opinion I entertain both of Colonel Milton and his family."

Alfred, who hated Lady Dossington, was perfectly alive to her speculation on his cousin, which he was determined to encourage, merely for the sake of disappointing her Ladyship, very meekly answered, "You do me but common justice, I assure you, Lady Dossington, in believing that I must be most proud not only of the honour you do my family, but of your condescending to consult my poor opinion upon any project in which your Ladyship feels the slightest interest."

"The fact is," continued Lady Dossington, looking across the room at her daughter and Herbert (who was then, under pretence of listening to Lady Maria, quietly seated with

Emily in Park-lane), "I have for some time observed the very decided attention which your cousin has paid to my daughter, Lady Susan—"

"Attention!" exclaimed Alfred; "why, my dear Madam! I never saw a man so much in love in my life! and if I can in any way forward your Ladyship's views—"

"Love!" replied the Countess, drawing up her little person to its utmost height and frigidity; "I know nothing about his being in love,—that is quite a secondary consideration; and as to wishes, you cannot suppose, Mr. Milton, that *I* can be anxious for a connexion, which, however respectable your family may be, is so far beneath what my daughters have every right to expect."

Alfred could hardly refrain from laughing outright at this little ebullition of her Ladyship's hereditary pride and impertinence; but, checking himself, he very gravely bowed without speaking.

"However, as I have heard that Colonel

Milton is a man of the highest character, and a great favourite with Lord Dossington; that his fortune will, in all probability, be very considerable, and that there is a possibility of his father's elevation to the peerage; the disinclination I might otherwise have felt to see my daughter the wife of any one inferior to herself in rank, is in some measure diminished: therefore, in the event of my daughter having no decided aversion to your cousin—though, of course, in a matter of this serious nature, she will be guided by me—and if Sir Herbert's man of business is authorized to come forward and propose to Lord Dossington's solicitor such terms and provisions as may be deemed eligible for the proper establishment of my daughter, it is possible that we may be induced to withdraw our objections. Though I beg you to remember, Mr. Milton, that it is far from being a match that we can consider desirable in any other than a pecuniary point of view."

"Nothing can be more just or natural,"

answered Alfred, "than your Ladyship's observations; and I can almost take upon myself to assure you, that my uncle will consider no sacrifice of his fortune too great to insure such a connexion for his son. And my cousin, who it is evident must be strongly attached to Lady Susan, will be the happiest man in the world, if you will permit me to acquaint him that your Ladyship sanctions his addresses to your daughter."

After a little consideration, Lady Dossington answered: "Why, on reflection, I think I would prefer, for the present, that you would refrain from making any direct communication on the subject; for I do not wish to raise any hopes in his mind, until I have completely ascertained the nature of his prospects, or until I have been officially made acquainted with his father's propositions. Pray, what do you consider the amount of Sir Herbert's fortune to be?"

"Why," replied Alfred, "though I have no positive data to go upon, yet, from something

which fell from one of the partners of Coutts' the other day, I believe I am within the mark, in stating it to exceed fifteen thousand a-year."

"Not more!" answered Lady Dossington; but I believe he is an only son?"

"Yes, and every thing his father possesses is settled upon him, with the exception of Lady Milton's jointure."

"Well, Mr. Milton, I think I should have no objection to your mentioning the subject to Sir Herbert on his arrival, as coming entirely from yourself; remembering, at the same time, that the matter is, of course, perfectly indifferent to us, from the motives I have before assigned: and as I shall expect any proposition which may be offered, to be conducted through Lord Dossington's solicitor, our dignity will not be compromised; and we can either accept or refuse, according to the nature of the terms proposed."

Then rising, and wishing Alfred good-night, she proceeded to join the rest of the ladies, who were preparing to retire.

"A very pretty specimen of motherly affection and disinterestedness are you, my Lady Doss," muttered Alfred, as her Ladyship turned away from him. "The idea of your supposing you could deceive me; why, you would give the best branch in your genealogical tree to catch Herbert. Condescension, indeed! it is too ridiculous—but you shall smart for it, my lady; and I am not Alfred Milton, if I do not exhibit you. The idea of your making a tool of me—of *me*, of all the men in the world!" And then joining the rest of the men, and pretending not to see Lord Dossington, he exclaimed, "What a sensible, charming woman is Lady Dossington!"

When the ladies retired to their rooms, Lady Dossington, calling her eldest daughter, told her she wished to have a few minutes' conversation with her. "Jane, my dear!" said her Ladyship, "as I have arranged a *partie* for your sister Susan, I wish to know from you, whether you think she would feel

any particular reluctance at the idea of marrying a man much her inferior in rank?"

"Why, mamma," answered Lady Jane, "we have certainly never thought of marrying any man who was not at least our equal; but, you know, if it is your wish, of course we put our own feelings out of the question."

"That I can perfectly understand, my dear," replied her mother; "but in this instance the degradation will not be so great, as Mr. Milton—"

"Colonel Milton!" exclaimed Lady Jane, interrupting the Countess; "why mamma, Susan's pride would, I know—"

"Your sister's pride, my dear Jane, is very laudable; and, I thank Heaven, the care I have taken to instil into your minds a proper sense of your own dignity has not been thrown away;—but Susan must remember that she is now six-and-twenty; that Mr. Milton will be immensely rich; and that, although his family is certainly respectable, yet there will be no necessity for seeing much of them;—

besides, Lady Milton, you know, is every where, and Mr. Herbert Milton is really not so bad for the son of an East India trader. You must therefore, my love, prepare her for this event, and endeavour to persuade her to forget the difference which exists in their rank."

"Oh, mamma, if that is all, I shall not have much difficulty in persuading her. Why, surely, you must have seen that she has long been in—"

"In what?" exclaimed Lady Dossington, with a look of surprise and anger.

"Dear mamma," replied her daughter, recovering herself, "you never will let one finish what one is going to say. I meant, that Susan has long been in readiness to marry any person whom you and papa think a proper match for her;—of course, we never had any choice of our own."

Lady Dossington, reassured, by this fortunate turn in her daughter's answer, that the dreadful monosyllable "Love" had not pol-

luted her child's mind, now added: "Well, my dear, I have always had every reason to pride myself upon the correctness and obedience of your conduct, and I now wish you to prepare your sister for the event, and tell her I shall expect her to marry Mr. Milton as soon as his father returns to England. At the same time, I cannot permit her to appear more intimate with him than with any other young man whom she meets with: let her be civil, that is all—that is necessary: he will dine now and then in Brook-street, as usual, and you may all dance with him once at balls, but nothing farther, for I will not have it said that we are making up to him. Now, my dear, good-night!"

Lady Jane was not long before she communicated to her sister the above conversation, and poor Lady Susan (who never thought that any man, a commoner too, whom her mother condescended to point out as a "proper match," could dream of refusing the proffered honour) now retired to rest with the delight-

ful, but illusive, hope of marrying the only man whom she ever loved—the only person for whom she dared to avow her partiality, even to her sister: she as little imagined that Herbert was utterly unconscious of the attack that was to be made upon him, as that he could balance between the fashionable daughter of the Lord Dossington, and the poor orphan of a man whom nobody knew.

When the carriages drove round to the hall door in the morning, and as soon as the various imperials, cap-cases, dressing-boxes, and numerous *et ceteras,* were properly arranged in the different vehicles, and the ladies' maids, with their large straw hats and green veils, well packed in the rumbles, Herbert proceeded to hand Lady Dossington and her daughters to their coach, and then returned to take leave of his noble host and hostess.

After replying most gratefully to her Ladyship's "I hope we shall have the pleasure of seeing you here at the next meeting," and the significant "You *must* come, Herbert; the

Dossingtons will certainly be here," of his Lordship, Herbert jumped into his cousin's britchka, and away they started for town as fast as four horses could whirl them. After a silence of some miles, during which Alfred was absorbed in calculating the safest method of bringing his own plans to a successful issue, Herbert was wrapped up in the anticipated changes which his father's arrival would, he feared, produce in his prospect of marrying Miss Manby:—the latter at length broke silence, by saying, "After all, Alfred, do you know, I do not think Lady Dossington is so disagreeable as I expected, and really, the girls are very clever and pleasant: I should like them all much better, if the mother could now and then lay aside her eternal pride and frigidity, and if the daughters did not continually endeavour to ape their father's sarcastic and bitter manner, which disfigures their appearance quite as much as their resemblance to their father's person."

"Oh, you think she is proud, do you? I

will answer for it, you would change your opinion, if you were to know what passed between us last evening," replied Alfred.

"Why, the fact is, Master Alfred, your *tête-à-tête* was not lost upon me: you appeared to have thawed her Ladyship most wonderfully; I never saw her so condescending and amiable. I'faith, Alfred, you are a dangerous person, and so thought old Doss, for he looked as jealous as a Turk: come, come! you are not seriously thinking of undermining the Peer's repose, and depriving the Countess, at her time of life, of the Diana reputation she has so long enjoyed, '*La dame sans amour, et sans reproche.*'"

"Jealous! say you, my gentle hero? you are a pretty fellow to talk of jealousy and repose of mind. Pray, may I ask, what would your fair and forlorn Sylvia say, if she could have witnessed your flirtation, during the last night, with that tart little *vinaigrette* Lady Susan?"

"Were that all, Alfred, poor Emily need

entertain no sort of apprehension :—she could not pay her own beauty and my taste so poor a compliment, as to imagine that I could ever think of her and Lady Susan the same day."

"No, indeed!" retorted his cousin; "that's very probable, for you appear to have entirely forgotten the one, whilst you have been making love to the other."

"Love! Alfred, what nonsense! Why, I should as soon think of following your example of making the *cour* to Lady Dossington."

"Come, come! that is a very poor way of turning the joke."

"Joke! my good fellow; you may think so, but I never was more serious, and a most capital thing it would be for you."

"I should be very sorry, Alfred," answered his companion, "if any one thought so except yourself. Thank God! I have neither said nor done any thing which could be misconstrued into such an intention."

"I do not know that," replied the other;

"remember their Ladyships' eyes and ears are as sharp as their tongues, and when a young man with large prospects neither walks, talks, nor attends to any one else, there is fair ground to suppose he means something;—moreover, your little *ingénue* of twenty-six is always provided with a double share of acuteness in such matters."

"Why, after all, Alfred, what could I do? I had no choice left between being bored to death with Lady Maria's unintelligible learning, and the Lady Bossville's more agreeable impertinence: besides, it was but commonly decent to shew them some attention, after their pressing me to go to the Grange for the *battues* in November—"

"Where you will be the principal game they will aim at."

"I trust, Alfred, their eyes will be opened by that time, even if they were so absurd as to think of my venturing to aspire to the mighty honour: *en attendant*, my dear fellow, you forget the peer's cook: remember your

maxim of always respecting the husband, making love to the wife, and flirting with the daughters of every man who possesses a perfect artist!"

"And, I assure you, I do not forget either one or the other. Egad! I have the very highest consideration for 'Marinade,' he is the only straightforward or upright member of the family; and if Doss's daughters went off as well as his dinners, though they were as numerous as the progeny of Darius, they would not so long have remained on his hands, like corked wine, of which, to do him justice, he has less than most people."

"Well, Alfred, joking aside, I sincerely trust Lady Doss does not see the thing in the light you do; indeed, if that were all, she might imagine the same of every man who either dances with, or speaks to her daughters; and she must be indeed blind with vanity and pride, if she is not aware that half the cards which are left with her porter are, in fact, visits to her cook, the Sieur Marinade."

"That is very well," retorted Alfred, "for

a sentimental man, indeed. Egad, Herbert! you improve; why you have caught the bitter infection from your friend, Lady Susan; but, notwithstanding all this, I see no reason, because you are enamoured of the Peer's '*sautés* and *salmis*,' that you should make such fierce love to his daughters. Moreover, Herbert, whether you are addressing yourself to a *suprême de volaille*, or a *poulette* at Almack's, you have such a serious *empressé* air, that whilst you are making the most trivial observation, one would imagine that your whole soul was wrapped up in the contents of the cloak which you are hanging on some fair shoulder, though the individual within interests you at the same time about as much as a clothes-horse."

"It is not my fault, Alfred; for the fact is, as you know, I have no carriage, and want now and then a lift; besides, if Nature has endowed me with such a melancholy Manchegan visage, I assure you I abhor the idea of being considered a male coquet, and think nothing more dishonourable than the very

common practice, now-a-days, of endeavouring to gain some poor girl's affection, merely for the unworthy gratification of adding one more to one's string of conquests:—mine, thank God! have hitherto been confined to one."

"Well, Herbert, all I can say, since you are going to give me another sermon, is, that I or you will be son-in-law to Lord Dossington, before you are aware of it: remember, there are five brothers, and they all fight,—therefore, I would advise you to take care of yourself; and in the mean time, as we are sure to have a late night at Crockford's, I shall take the liberty of going to sleep, and recommend you to do the same."—Then folding his roquelaire well round his person, and drawing his travelling-cap '*à la Guiche*' over his eyes, he quietly ensconced himself in a corner, and left Herbert to his meditations, which were not interrupted until the carriage drew up at Alfred's small house in Park-lane, where Herbert found a messenger waiting to announce the actual arrival of his father in London.

CHAPTER II.

CALCULATION and artifice were the *primum mobile* of Alfred Milton's thoughts and actions: they had indeed become an integral part of his nature; and it would have been as difficult for him to adopt an open straightforward line of conduct, as it would have been repulsive to an honourable mind to be guilty of any underhand proceeding. There was a singular similarity between Alfred's character and that of one of his most intimate friends, a celebrated diplomatist, whose passion for fiction was of that inveterate nature, that he would rather employ the most wilful falsehoods, though certain of ultimate detection, than tell the plain undisguised truth, which would have deprived him of the very singular pleasure of inventing a still more glaring fabrication in order to extricate himself from the odium of the first. The stake

at issue at present was of such magnitude, so much depended upon the skill and caution of his proceedings, that it was necessary for him to be fully prepared for every possible contingency. It was important that he should not appear connected in any manner with the schemes which he was plotting against his cousin; and whose future happiness,—perhaps his existence, he was resolved to sacrifice without pity or remorse. He knew enough of his uncle to feel convinced that he never would betray him to Herbert; Lady Milton was ignorant of his plans; Lady Catesby he had reduced to silence; and all that remained was to induce Herbert to abstain from communicating to his father, that he (Alfred) was even aware of his attachment.

No sooner were the anonymous letters addressed to Sidney and Miss Manby communicated to him, than he immediately wrote the following lines to Lady Catesby, which had the effect of arresting any farther attempts on her part.

"Glynn Castle, 3d December, 18—.

"You have dared to despise my warning: I have discovered your letters; lie not, they *are* yours. A word, a line more, and you are lost. Choose, madam, between my silent contempt, and my open, deadly, implacable vengeance. You know me, and still better do I know you. Tremble! for you are at my mercy!"

Though bursting with fury and disappointment, she was forced to submit: she was in his power, and she knew him well enough to be aware that he was fully equal to put the threat contained in his letter into immediate execution. Patience was her only resource: the time might come when she might perhaps revenge herself;—she determined to wait.

To secure Herbert's silence was now an important point;—therefore, as the former was about to quit him upon receiving the intelligence of his father's arrival, Alfred, perceiving the agitation of his manner, shook him

with great apparent affection by the hand, and said, "Courage, courage, my dear fellow, *'ce n'est que le premier pas qui coute.'* I dare say, when I call, that I shall find my uncle nursing you on his knee:—he will forget that twenty-five years have elapsed since your black attendants used to run about with you in their arms; he'll be rather surprised to find twenty inches of human flesh converted into five feet ten, of as tough materials as e'er Dacian gladiator could have desired in his first-born."

"I shall be quite content," rejoined Herbert, "if he should but receive me kindly. I wish it were over, with all my heart;—but adieu, I must lose no time."

"By-the-bye," said Alfred, stopping his cousin as he was leaving the room, "I quite forgot to say, that it will be most prudent not to mention my name to your father, should the subject of Miss Manby be started."

"Why not?" replied the other: "I thought you intended exposing Lady Catesby? I relied on your assistance."

"Of course, of course! my dear friend; but can't you see, that if we both set at him at one time, he is just the kind of man to suspect us of being in league against him: he will swear that I am conspiring with you to thwart his views, and we shall both get into a scrape."

"What you say is not at all unlikely; and indeed it is fortunate you mentioned the circumstance, or I very probably should have called upon you as a witness."

"So you may, my good fellow, later; but, you may rely upon it, it will be better to permit the subject to proceed first from him,—that will give me a fair reason for speaking my mind openly; I can then shew up Lady Catesby, exculpate Miss Manby, laud you to the skies, and the victory will be ours: so leave him to me—I'll manage him or the devil's in it! But not a word about me, until I give you the signal, unless you wish to spoil every thing!"

"Well then, do not forget your promise, and, for God's sake! lose no time, for I am

resolved not to remain many days, or hours, in suspense: I may as well ascertain the truth at once, as linger on in a state of uncertainty. Shall I say you are coming? I wish you would accompany me, to keep up my spirits."

"Impossible! *caro mio!* Make my duty to your father, and tell him that I cannot have the honour of paying my respects to him until the morning, or late this evening, if I can get away from the House. Say, nothing should have prevented my hastening to welcome him to Old England but my being obliged to attend in my place to support a petition from some of my constituents, relative to an enclosure bill;—these matters must be attended to, *bon gré mal gré:* egad, I shall be delighted to get rid of the bore; *le jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle.*"

"Very well," rejoined Herbert; "but, I conclude, your occupation will be a sufficient apology. I am sure he would much rather have found me stuck up in a nasty guard-room, or

trudging away at a field-day, than just returned from breathing the bracing air of Newmarket Heath :" and saying this, he hastened towards Berkeley Square, where he found Sir Herbert and Lady Milton impatiently awaiting his arrival.

The idea of so soon finding himself in the presence of a parent, whom, as it were, he had never seen, awakened the strongest, the most painful sensations in his mind as he paused for a few seconds on the steps of the hotel. He felt not only that he was a stranger to his father, but that Sir Herbert was not bound to him by any of those progressive links, those endearing recollections, which ordinarily afford nourishment and strength to the bonds of nature.

His interview, to which he had so long looked forward with mixed sensations of hope and apprehension, had the painful effect of fully realizing his worst fears; whilst it more than ever convinced him of the existence of a deep-rooted prejudice, which his

father had evidently imbibed against him, through the machinations of some secret enemy; and in the expression of which, he was with difficulty restrained, even by the presence of Lady Milton, whose tenderness for her son's feelings was repeatedly manifested during the continuance of the distressing scene.

Eager to communicate to Emily the result of his first meeting with his father, Herbert hastened as soon as possible to join her at a *soirée*, to which both had been invited, at the splendid mansion of Mr. Belleroche. This was one of those small *recherché* parties, to which only a few of the most chosen of the elect themselves, undoubted, unequivocal *rose croix* were admitted; being a choice selection from the Almack's list, purified and doubly distilled in an alembic still more severe than that of the ladies patronesses themselves. Being, moreover, particularly devoted to *ecarté*, it was attended principally by married women, who, if they had daughters *out*, gene-

rally took this opportunity of sending them to seek beauty sleep in bed before ten o'clock, or else with their brothers to a play, of course in a *private-box*. As Herbert approached the house, he imagined for a moment, from the tranquillity which reigned in the street, that he had mistaken the night, had not the brilliant lights from the windows, and the glare from the lamps of ten or a dozen carriages re-assured him.

He arrived without difficulty, and entered the splendid suite of rooms; without the misery of being hustled at the door by footmen, kicked, punched, and jammed in the hall by their masters, or pinched, and scratched with pins on the staircase by their mistresses; but, above all, without that disgusting process of hearing his patronymic bandied about from one hired varlet to another, until it is at last launched into the ears of the lady of the house, in a mutilated and undistinguishable shape; to which spot, unless a person be gifted with the wings of an eagle,

or some other method of skimming over the mass before him, he has little chance that his individual self will arrive in a more flourishing condition.

Every thing that met the eye, as Herbert traversed the different apartments of this magnificent abode, bespoke the admirable taste of its proprietors. Civil and respectful servants (in general, a pretty fair criterion of the good-breeding of their master); lights judiciously placed to give effect to the draperies and hangings of the rooms; furniture vying in classic elegance of form with the genuine antiques which filled the surrounding cabinets; Etruscan, or Campanian vases and cinerariæ, intermingled with statues, casts, and models of the most exquisite workmanship; some few fine pictures, a library of scarce and valuable works, and, above all, the grace and beauty of the fair mistress of the mansion herself, which was in perfect keeping with all around her, at once demonstrated that Mr. Belleroche was a man of no

ordinary mind or acquirements. Although nearly two hundred persons were assembled, Herbert was enabled to approach Mrs. Belleroche without any of the miseries usually attendant upon those truly English, and now (God be praised!) demised squeezes, which bore such painful resemblance to a steam-engine deprived of its propelling qualities. Mr. Belleroche received his guests without effort or fatigue, and appeared the very reverse of one of those piping, puffing, unhappy creatures whom one has seen half-dead with exertion, half-blind with heat, confusedly my-lording commoners, mistering peers, resuscitating the dead, killing the living, marrying old maids, and making bachelors of benedicts, who would reciprocally have given their ears to have changed conditions. Not only did this party differ essentially in all the foregoing points from the usual indigenous nocturnal gathering, but there reigned an air of business in the apartments, which plainly shewed that something more important

than common flirtations was going on. Four or five *ecarté* tables were surrounded by eager groups, especially of ladies, who appeared to be watching with intense anxiety the vicissitudes of the game. If indeed *ecarté* be what is called a "*Jeu de contenance,*" the most unskilful physiognomist might have read every card in his opponent's hand, had he watched the eyes of the fair speculators, whose faces flushed, darkened, radiated, or became pale, as a king, a point, or the vole was succesively marked; save, indeed, some firm old dowagers, the impassibility of whose features might not only have done honour to the most callous croupier at the Salon at Paris, but would have baffled the penetrating genius of Lavater himself.

Emily, who had attended her friend the Baroness to a concert, not having yet made her appearance, Herbert placed himself close to one of the groups. Mrs. Thornby and a foreign diplomatic *attaché,* were the card-holders, with a numerous "Gallery" of sup-

porters on either side. Large sums in gold and notes were spread out in regular order; whilst by the markers it appeared the game was nearly concluded, one party having counted four, the other three points. It was the Lady's deal, and she had the advantage of the point. In vain, however, she cut, shuffled, and squeezed, and balanced the cards, no king would make his appearance, a recusant seven only answering to her call.

"Do not look at your cards," was uttered by half-a-dozen voices, "*cela porte malheur!*"

—"Wait until your adversary has declared himself."

"Mrs. Thornby held her cards firmly pressed and packed against her bosom, whilst the foreigner examined his hand—a dead silence on one side—whisperings on the other. After mature deliberation, long consultation, and significant pointing to cards, the diplomatist exclaimed with a smirk,—

"*Madame est à quatre, je crois: ma foi, il faudroit jouer! c'est par ici qu'il faut com-*

mencer! Madame, nous aurons l'honneur de jouer."

Upon this, the lady, without spreading out her cards, packed them up a little, one after the other, to examine their heads, and then, with a loud "Ah!" exclaimed, "*Il y est, le voici le roi!*"—a sort of scream of pleasure burst from the lips of several of the fair by-standers, whilst the eyes of the men gleamed with satisfaction. Hands were held out to receive the various stakes, which Mrs. Thornby was in the act of collecting for distribution.

"Count her cards!" whispered one of the losers to the player, who, after lifting up his spectacles that he might see more clearly, obeyed the hint, and then said, very politely, "*Madame, attendez un petit instant, je vous prie, vous vous êtes donnée six cartes.*"

"*Six cartes, impossible!*"—but there they were. Seriousness and disappointment succeeded in an instant to the previous hilarity of the supposed winners; gaiety and hope to the depression of the adverse party.

"How fortunate!"—"How very unlucky!"—"Are you betting? you ought not to have spoken!"—"Dreadfully careless of that old cat!" said a young man, who had bet thirty to twelve on the game; "I'll never back her again! I believe she did it on purpose to throw me over."—"She is betting, perhaps, on the other side!"—"Halves with Lady Graspall!"

Mrs. Thornby had not certainly committed this error unintentionally; she well knew that she had a greater chance of taking in the king in six than five cards, and she had often tried the plan with success; trusting to escape detection from the confusion, the want of attention, and anxiety usual upon the end of a game.

"What is to be done? I am still to play: you draw a card, do you not?" observed the lady, resuming her hand, as if in ignorance of the penalty—"No, no, you lose the deal and a point."—"Impossible!"—"Appeal to the rules!"—"Refer!"—"There can be no doubt."

At last, after a considerable show of resist-

ance, and pretending to feel herself very ill-treated, the game was renewed, and the adversary marked his point, and commenced dealing. Intense anxiety was visible in the countenances on both sides.

"*Que faites-vous, Madame?*"—"You must ask."—"I would not."—"What do you think?"—Shrugging of shoulders, shaking of heads, but no answer.—"Shall I?"—"Egad! it's a difficult case, but upon my word I should ask."—"I ought not, but since you all wish it—*Je vous prie, Monsieur, de me donner des cartes.*" "*Volontiers, Madame,—ah! quelle canaille!*" exclaimed the gentleman, as he cast from him all the contents of his hand, "*ah! que j'ai échappé bel.*" The whole party appeared to be hanging on tenter-hooks. "*Combien, Madame?*" "*Trois si vous le voulez bien.*" A smile irradiated the countenances of Mrs. Thornby's supporters, gravity was depicted on that of the Marquess's allies. "*Hardiment,*" observed a gentleman to Mrs. Thornby, "I see, by their faces, they have

nothing. First that, and then that, and then the other; and then it is your game."—"This?" —"No, no, that!" Mrs. Thornby played the knave of trumps, it fell transfixed by the queen. *Grand hesitation.* "*Qu'en pensez vous-là?*"—"*Oui, oui, c'est bien ça—ferme!*" he played the nine of diamonds; it expired at the feet of the ace of trumps.—"*Nous sommes perdus,*" was sorrowfully uttered on one side; "It is ours, of course," from the opponents. Another trump was played by Mrs. Thornby, which smote an eight of diamonds. Now came the struggle—she played the queen of spades—a scream from all parties; it was swept off by the king; and, to the horror of the lady and her friends, the seven of diamonds decided the game against them, her remaining card being the queen of hearts. Then followed the usual tardy advice and observations.

"If you had played in any other way you must have won."—"What could have induced you to begin with the trump? if you

had even played the heart, you would not have lost."

However, these discoveries were all too late, and the lady retired from the field in execrable humour with herself, and with the most amiable wishes on the part of her former supporters.

"*Je vous prie, Monsieur le Marquis, de me donner dix livres,*" exclaimed Lady Graspall, as the former was endeavouring to satisfy the claimants, whom it was his duty to pay, as dealer.

"*Mais, Madame,*" rejoined the *attaché*, very politely, "*si vous vous rappelez bien, vous avez parié de l'autre coté.*"

"*Comment, Monsieur, de l'autre coté?*" retorted her Ladyship, drawing up with a look of great indignation, "*mais qu'est-ce que vous dites donc? Je vous assure que vous vous trompez d'une manière tout-à-fait bizarre.*"

"*Je vous demande mille graces,*" replied the well bred Frenchman, "*mais j'ai cru vous avoir vu mettre du coté de Madame.*"

"*Ah fi!*" returned Lady Graspall, her eyes sparkling with anger; "*comment ose-t-on imaginer des horreurs pareilles.*"

"Did you not see me put down here?" said she, turning to a person at her elbow.

"Indeed, I forget. I saw you put down something, but on which side I know not," was the answer.

"Oh, I can swear to it!" exclaimed the irritated lady.

"*Ah, Madame, vous le dites, cela suffit,*" rejoined the Marquess, shrugging up his shoulders, with the conviction that she was telling a falsehood.

"*Voici, mi Lady, vos dix Louis, mais il manquent huit livres alors de notre coté.*"

He then very civilly paid her demand, with a resolution in his own mind to return to Paris and to swear that *all* women in England cheated at cards, by way of a precedent to that very amiable assertion of M. Pillet's, that "all Englishwomen get tipsy after dinner."

Herbert, who had watched the whole pro-

ceeding, and had seen Lady Graspall stake two pounds on Mrs. Thornby's side, turned away with a look of disgust from her Ladyship, who had the impudence to complain of the shocking treatment she had met with.

In the mean time the Baroness and her young friend had entered the room, and Herbert proceeded to join them. Miss Manby plainly perceived by Herbert's manner, and the depression of his spirits, that his meeting with his father had not been satisfactory, and she implored him, as he valued her peace of mind, to conceal nothing from her. Assuring her most solemnly that not a word relative to herself had past between them, Colonel Milton replied to her request, by stating, as far as possible, the substance of his conversation with Sir Herbert, nor did he conceal the painful, the cruel sensations which had been awakened in his heart by his father's deportment towards him.

Instead of attending the House, as he had desired his cousin to represent to Sir Herbert,

Alfred had on this evening accepted a pressing invitation to join a "*partie fine*" at the Clarendon, where he was to meet three or four *premières danseuses*, the *cher ami* of one of these ladies, and two or three young men, at dinner; and having remained at the Club, to which he afterwards adjourned, until six in the morning, he returned home, threw himself into a warm bath, and proceeded to prepare his toilette for his interview with the Baronet. He had calculated on the bad effect that his usual style of dress might have upon Sir Herbert at their first meeting; he therefore tied an unstarched cravat round his neck, put on one plain waistcoat, and selected the remainder of his attire in a similar style of simplicity, bordering almost upon shabbiness; a disguise which excited the risibility of his own valet, whom he asked, as he quitted the room, whether he looked like a gentleman?

"Can't say as you do, exactly, Sir," replied the man coolly; "rather shabby genteel, I think, Sir, like Lord Pastern!"

"Oh, that will do exactly," replied Alfred, instead of reproving the fellow for his impertinence; and he now hastened to his cabriolet as he wished to present himself before nine o'clock in Berkeley-square, having already been made acquainted with the result of the previous day's occurrences by a note from his cousin.

Upon entering the room, he found Sir Herbert in the act of perusing the debates of the last evening. He immediately rose, and received Alfred in a manner expressive of the most cordial attachment, thanking him for the zeal and attention he had shewn in promoting his wishes, particularly as it regarded his parliamentary arrangements; to which Alfred replied, by disclaiming, with well-feigned humility, all pretensions to his uncle's approbation; declaring, that in what he had done to secure Sir Herbert a seat in Parliament, he was conscious of having performed nothing more than a public duty; adding, that he had also the happiness to know that the same

feeling existed at the India House, where his uncle's return as one of the Directors was beyond all doubt. At length the conversation turned upon Herbert and his pursuits, of which (as represented by Alfred with consummate duplicity) Sir Herbert expressed his warm and most decided disapprobation, especially as it respected his intimacy with Miss Manby; adding,

"I shall most certainly demand of him, that he forthwith give up all acquaintance with that young lady; and, moreover, that he give me his sacred promise never to hold any communication, direct or indirect, with her again; and if he dare to disobey, I will cut him off with a shilling. If he refuse to comply with my injunctions, I will take decided measures to enforce obedience, and I shall instantly make him acquainted with my determination."

Taking advantage of a moment's pause, Alfred interposed, saying, "I know his temper, Sir,—petulant and impatient of control,

he requires some management. Let me then entreat you, as the only recompense I have to ask for my humble services—let me implore you, Sir, as the only means of restoring harmony, and reconciling you to my cousin, that you will permit me to communicate directly from you on the subject. Your temper, Sir, too justly irritated, might induce you, perhaps, to overstep the bounds of moderation, so natural to your character. He, in return, might be guilty of some act of unpardonable disrespect, which you could not overlook, or I defend. Permit me, then, my dear Sir, to be the intermediary. All will go well; and I shall have the pleasure of seeing peace and harmony established between the two persons whom I most respect and love in the world."

The Baronet examined his nephew's countenance with a doubtful and hesitating look. The idea of confiding a subject of such importance to another, awakened the natural suspicion of his character; but Alfred had succeeded so well in establishing himself in

his good opinion, that at last he said, "There is as usual much good sense in your remark, and I can give no greater proof of the value I place upon your services, and my esteem for you as my nephew, than by consenting to your proposition; but remember, that I insist upon an immediate and unequivocal reply. He stands on the brink of a precipice; I am not accustomed to disobedience, nor will I submit to it."

Lady Milton's entering the room now put a stop to the conversation. The Baronet merely informing her, that he had instructed Alfred to communicate forthwith on the subject with Herbert, though he again repeated to Lady Milton, that the sentiments contained in his letter were unchanged and irrevocable.

The remainder of Alfred's visit was occupied in discussing Parliamentary and India House business, and it was not until two o'clock that he took his leave, promising to return to dinner, leaving his uncle highly satisfied with him, and drawing the most un-

favourable comparisons between his son and nephew.

Alfred's dread of being seen in his present masquerade, which had attracted Lady Milton's attention, was immense. He however contrived, by turning round the corner of Davies-street, where his cabriolet was in waiting, to escape observation; and springing in, he pulled the curtain, desiring his groom to drive him home as fast as possible.

On the previous evening, Lady Milton had ventured to enter into a long and earnest argument with Sir Herbert, in defence of her son; and upon Alfred's returning, she again renewed the subject, as she accompanied her husband in the carriage to pay visits, and to leave his name at the Palace. In vain, however, did she attempt to convince him of the injustice of his opinions regarding Herbert; in vain she offered to stake her existence upon the falsehood of those calumnies with which it was evident the Baronet's mind had been poisoned. It was to no purpose that she

referred him to the opinion of every one who knew his son; nor was she more successful in cautioning him against placing too much confidence in his nephew, whose character she did not hesitate to pourtray in very unfavourable colours. She implored Sir Herbert to retract the sentence of separation between his son and Emily, or, at all events, to explain his reasons for requiring such a separation. All her arguments, however, failed: Sir Herbert declaring, in answer, that he had just grounds for dissatisfaction; expatiating on Herbert's frivolities, which were in his opinion inexcusable. As to Lady Milton's remarks on his nephew, he observed that his judgment of him was not lightly formed; that he was indebted to him in the most particular manner: and he contrasted the conduct of the one, who had spontaneously devoted himself to obtain for him the only two situations he placed any value upon in England, whilst the other had been passing his time in idleness and dissipation at home, and

midnight brawls abroad, and had persisted in setting his advice and authority at defiance. In short, he concluded by commanding Lady Milton, as she valued her own domestic happiness, or his regard and confidence, not only to unite with him in exacting the required promise from his son, but on no account whatever either to write or speak to Miss Manby, or even to allude to her again. "The time will come, Laura, when you will ascertain that my conduct is neither capricious nor barbarous. I am a father," said Sir Herbert, "and have a right to demand obedience; and when I find my son is worthy of being trusted, I shall have no secrets from him."

"Am I not worthy, then, of being confided in?" demanded Lady Milton; "why refuse to me that confidence which you deny to your son?"

"I have hitherto never thwarted one of your wishes," said Sir Herbert, "or complained of a single action of your life; my esteem and affection for you have not been

less than you merit; but," continued he, "inasmuch as I have hitherto been indulgent, so, by heavens! will you find me severe, if you disregard my wishes. In that case, never! never will I again set eyes on either yourself or son!"

All attempts to obtain an explanation, or to ascertain the motives of Sir Herbert's conduct, being fruitless, Lady Milton felt that it was a duty she owed her husband, not only to co-operate with him, but that any farther opposition must bring destruction and misery on herself as well as her son.

"Were she in possession of twenty thousands a-year; were she a hundred times more virtuous and more amiable than you declare her to be, I never would listen to the subject for an instant—therefore let this be the last time that it is ever mentioned!"

This was Sir Herbert's last remark, and from this time Lady Milton paid implicit obedience to his wish. Upon her return to the hotel, her first step was to write imme-

diately to Herbert and Miss Manby, acquainting them both with every thing that had passed between the Baronet and herself, and urging them, by every thing that was sacred, to abandon all thoughts of each other, as a useless and vain pursuit, which must entail the most fatal consequences on both. Her letter to Herbert ended thus:—"I therefore earnestly implore you to avoid mentioning the subject to your father—nor can I, under any pretext, listen to it myself. I have promised, and I trust, my dear child, that you will not hesitate to give your father the same assurance of your immediate determination to meet his wishes. You may judge how painful it is for me to make this communication; but it would be an act of cruelty were I to conceal, for a moment, what has passed. I have sworn solemnly, and unequivocally, not only never to speak or write to Miss Manby, but never again to permit you to recur to her name. However distressing to my feelings, I cannot, and will not, break my word!"

CHAPTER III.

ALFRED quitted his uncle with the resolution of immediately proceeding to St. James's, to communicate the result of his interview to his cousin, who was on duty at the Palace.

"Well, Herbert, my dear fellow," said he sorrowfully, "I have seen your father, and most sorry am I to be the harbinger of bad news. I could have hardly believed it possible to find any human being so obstinate, so dead to every feeling of sympathy or pity."

"Have you then mentioned the subject?—have you exposed Lady Catesby?—have you opened his eyes to the truth?" demanded Herbert eagerly.

"All, every thing! I left no argument untried, no encomium, no method possible was omitted—but in vain. Nothing can alter his determination;—there is indeed, it appears to me, no hope whatever. Not only is he inex-

orable, but he has positively deputed me to state, that you are never to see his face again, unless you give him your solemn promise to break off all communication with Miss Manby. If you refuse, he is determined to adopt such measures as will secure your obedience. He has forbidden me ever to recur to the subject, and it was only by the greatest effort that I was enabled to prevent his personally proceeding to declare to you his unalterable resolution."

"By heaven! it is incredible!" replied Colonel Milton. "Did he give no reasons—assign no grounds for such an unnatural use of his prerogative?"

"None whatever!" replied Alfred: "and, moreover, he declares he will give none. He simply says, that he has a right to command, and in this he insists on your obeying."

"Never, never!" retorted Herbert, striking his forehead with vehemence. "Upon such conditions, never! Had he condescended to enter calmly upon the subject, and to offer

some valid reasons for wishing it, then I might have submitted; but thus, without assigning the least reason, to destroy my happiness—thus to sacrifice my feelings to mere rancour—this is too much!"

Wrought up to the highest pitch of excitement, which Alfred perceived with the malignant pleasure of a fiend, Herbert rapidly paced the apartment, and then striking the table violently with his hand, exclaimed, "I thank God, my character stands above the reach of slander! and I can make my way, notwithstanding. What are privations to me, if Emily is content to share my poverty? By G—! I will marry her at once! Is she not independent of control? By what right does my father assume the power of dictating to her?—to her, whose very name he has not ceased to persecute with remorseless, never-dying rancour!"

"I can scarcely be surprised at your anger and emotion," observed Alfred, during the first pause made by his cousin; "for, although

it is your duty to submit to much, yet, I frankly avow, my uncle has carried his severity to a greater length than I could have supposed."

"Unheard of!" exclaimed Herbert.

"Certainly his first reception of you," resumed Alfred; "his want of confidence, his suspicions and animadversions on your conduct; his readiness to believe the infernal stories he has heard of you, were all most cruel and unjust. But still," said Alfred, in an affected voice,—"still, remember, he is your father."

"By heaven! then, let him prove himself so!—by this single act of kindness!" Then, after a pause, he added, in a calmer tone, "I will, however, make one more effort: I will, as a last resource, throw myself at his feet; I will entreat him to admit me to his confidence; I will swear implicit obedience, though it cost me my life, if he will give me one—one single reason for his refusal! The idea of flying in his face and marrying with-

out his consent, is as hateful to my feelings as it is opposed to Miss Manby's principles. If he will grant me an explanation, I will solemnly promise to renounce her for ever, or to wait as long as he chooses to determine. He cannot deny me this, at least:—the instant we are relieved to-morrow, I will hasten to him."

"I will not have the cruelty to flatter you with a single hope—there is not a chance of his listening to you."

"Then, by G—! if he refuse," exclaimed Herbert passionately; "if he treat me as he did yesterday, the consequences be on his own head: it is a duty I owe to him and myself to demand an explanation."

"I think, my dear fellow, if I may venture to suggest, that you had better avoid all attempt at explanation—he will refuse you, rely upon it, point blank, and that, most probably, not in the most flattering terms. It is possible, even with your kind and pliant temper, that you may perhaps commit yourself,

by uttering some expression susceptible of being misconstrued; this may lead to something violent from him, until at last it may reach that point that neither can forget nor forgive."

"I never shall forget, in his presence, that he is my father," rejoined Colonel Milton; "let his treatment of me be what it may: God forbid! that I should ever forget myself so far, as not to remember the respect due to him. At all events, I would rather hear my fate from his own lips;—he might be induced to be more explicit."

"That he swears he never will be, until you have first attended to his commands. Take my advice," said Alfred, as he saw his cousin more determined; "consent to his wishes. It is no trifling matter to sacrifice twenty thousand pounds a-year for a woman, when you may console yourself, by selecting whom you please from Grosvenor Gate to Wapping Stairs. You will also most proba-

bly confer a favour upon the lady herself, by allowing her to marry Seabridge;—come, come, Berty, listen to reason; let me carry back your promise of abdication to the governor; let me gladden his heart by saying, you never will see her again."

Alfred well knew that in his cousin's present state of mind, this advice would have a contrary effect to that which it appeared calculated to produce. He knew enough of human nature to feel aware that opposition in this case, and an appearance of co-operation with Sir Herbert, would but add greater violence and determination to a mind labouring under the effects of such a deep-rooted and invincible passion.

"I am resolved," replied Herbert, "to speak openly to him to-morrow, follow what may; though, in defiance of his wishes, it shall not take place without his knowledge: both he and the whole world shall know it. The world shall see that I placed Emily in

one scale, and twenty-thousand a-year in the other. My conduct shall prove the value I attach to each."

"You are master of your own actions; you are, moreover, the best judge what will be most conducive to your own happiness, but I should strongly advise you to pause ere you throw yourself away—above all, ere you adopted a line of conduct which must render your father's forgiveness impossible: do you attach any value to that, since you despise his fortune?"

"How can you ask such a question?—the very highest importance; it is essential to my happiness."

"Well then," rejoined Alfred, "ponder well upon the consequences of such a step; but if you are determined to disobey, if you are bent on your purpose, for God's sake! avoid declaring your intention to him; do not, to his face, tell him that you defy his authority. No, no! much as I love you, Berty, and wish you happy, by heaven! that would make me

abandon the cause at once!—for most certainly he never then could overlook your conduct. Better would it be a thousand times to fly to Gretna, and then return and throw yourselves at his feet: it is your only chance; if you doubt me, consult Sidney,—the Baroness,—whomsoever you please. I speak frankly and fairly; reject my advice if you like, but if you do, you will rue the consequences."

"What!" replied Herbert, "would you have me marry without giving him an opportunity of relaxing? no, no! that I cannot consent to."

"You know, my good fellow, I am not in love," answered Alfred: "I can reason calmly on the subject. Egad! I would see twenty Miss Manbys drowned in the Thames ere I would sacrifice Milton-park and my birthright for them; but," continued he, "if I were in love, I might perhaps follow your example as far as that went. *J'y penserois toujours à deux fois;* but under no circumstances could

I ever be so lost to common sense and prudence as to think of telling my father to his face, that I cared no more for him than the year forty! Besides, Herbert, you must allow that it is somewhat absurd to hear you talk of filial duty and candour, when you are resolved, '*coute qui coute,*' to fly in his face; and when the principal object of your explanation, as you call it, would be to tell him you defied him, his oaks, and his acres. *Mille tonnerres!* I would rather you should tell him so than I."

"I will consult my mother on the subject," replied Herbert, "and if she agree in your opinion, I will adopt it forthwith; in the mean time, how can I avoid sending an immediate answer?—what can I say in reply?"

"Leave that to me. I will set his mind at rest for the present; in the mean time, take your own measures."

They were now interrupted by the serjeant of the Guard, who brought Colonel Milton a letter which he hastily tore open; it was that

from his mother, already alluded to. This letter, which Herbert read and re-read, with evident symptoms of intense suffering, sufficed at once to induce him to attend to his cousin's advice, of relinquishing all attempts to discuss the matter with his father.

"You are right, my dear Alfred," exclaimed Colonel Milton, as he placed the epistle in his cousin's hand,—"it is as you imagined; even my poor mother is now to be arrayed against me: but my mind is made up! Milder treatment," continued he, "and the slightest confidence, and I might have been induced, at least, to postpone my intentions; but it is done, and I shall now take my own measures."

"Well, my dear Herbert," answered the other, "if you are determined, in despite of all I can say, I will do what I can to assist you; but, hang it! do, for God's sake! consider for a moment; it is a foolish romantic business. The girl is certainly not worth the sacrifice!"

"I am the best judge of Miss Manby's worth," replied Herbert, with some degree of warmth; "and as we cannot agree upon that point, you will oblige me by making no farther observation upon that subject."

"Well, well," said, Alfred sighing, "I see you are determined to have your own way, so I will bid you adieu, hoping, *tout de même*, that you will think better of it.—But," said he, "as it is near six, the palace-clock striking the three quarters—I must away, my dear fellow, for your father is as punctual as a Christmas bill. Call on me after the levée to-morrow, and I wait for you. In the mean time, I will tranquillize his mind, and tell him, that you will give him an answer speedily; but, for heaven's sake! do not throw me over! It is all very well for you, my dear Herbert, who have nothing to do but to give up one girl and marry another, with Milton Park as the recompense of your obedience: but if your father discover that I have been playing this double game,—which

I do, God knows, to serve you,—I shall be lost for ever."

"Fear not," replied Herbert, shaking his cousin by the hand, "I would rather sacrifice myself a thousand times than compromise you."

"I tell you fairly," answered Alfred, "that it is very important for me to stand well with your father, as I hope, through his assistance, to get one of those snug little sinecures in the Customs or Stamps. Twelve or fifteen hundred a-year, with nothing to do, is a very agreeable thing for a poor, and, above all, an idle man; and the discovery would destroy my pretty vision for ever."

"Rely on me, Alfred," rejoined his cousin; "I feel too deeply your kind advice to repay you with so much ingratitude.—No; I must do you the justice to say, you have, under existing circumstances, done all in your power, so that, whatever happens, you are exculpated."

They now separated,—the one to glory in

the success of his machinations, which now appeared drawing to a close; the other to write a few lines to Emily, in which he urged, more passionately than ever, the offer of his hand, and declared his intention of calling after the levée on the following day.

Upon Alfred's arrival at his uncle's, the latter eagerly demanded the issue of his negotiation.

"Almost every thing you can desire, Sir," replied the wily hypocrite; "and if you will condescend to intrust the matter to me for a few days, I have no doubt I shall be enabled to put an end to it in a manner the most satisfactory."

"Has he given the assurance I required?"

"Not exactly, Sir—he asks, as a favour, that you will allow him a day or two to consider.—I entreat, Sir, that you will grant him this indulgence, as I am confident that it will have the happiest results. He listened with great deference to your commands, and I have no doubt that, in a day or two, he will

voluntarily come forward to give you the promise you demand."

Though not entirely satisfied with this communication, Sir Herbert assented to the delay; and it was agreed that Colonel Milton should be allowed a week to consider the subject, and, in the mean time, that the Baronet should avoid any allusion to it.

"I have just received a notification that it is His Royal Highness the Prince Regent's intention to confer upon me the vacant red ribbon," said Sir Herbert, "at the levée, and you will oblige me by desiring Herbert to accompany me: after that, Mr. Alfred, I shall request you to attend me to ——, for the purpose of introducing me to my constituents; we will take Milton Park on our way back, and upon the day of my return I shall expect to receive my son's unequivocal answer."

The subsequent morning to that on which the Prince Regent had announced his intention of holding a levée and Chapter of the

Bath had arrived, cards had been also issued by the Lord Chamberlain for a grand ball on the following night, to which Sir Herbert and his family had the honour of being invited. Precisely as the clock struck twelve (almost an hour-and-a-half earlier than was necessary), the Baronet, attended by his son and two other gentlemen, stepped into Lady Milton's carriage. The whole equipage was in the style of those good old times, when it was considered as a matter of course that the nobility and gentry attending the court should go in what is called State, or, at all events, with some distinctive marks to declare they were not merely driving down to the United Service Club, or Mr. Waithman's shawl-shop.

Upon an occasion of this nature, the Baronet, though a man of extreme simplicity, was not displeased to see his coachman and two tall footmen glittering in all the splendour of their state liveries; their cuffs and collars covered with lace, the seams of their white coats concealed with embroidery, displaying the family

crest and quarterings; silk stockings on their brawny legs; large *bouquets* in their button-holes; long gold-headed canes in their hands, their well-powdered hair decked with large cocked hats, and buckles in their shoes; whilst the beauty of a pair of Mr. Henderson's fine greys, which stood pawing, snorting, and rattling their bits against the pole, was enhanced by the richness of the harness, and the profusion of red and white satin ribbons which adorned their manes and tails. Nor did *Singée*, who was destined to form the centre of the group behind, detract from the splendour of the equipage; this individual being adorned in a rich and graceful oriental dress: a handsome shawl round his waist, a superb sabre by his side, and a brilliant hanger stuck in his girdle.

Though just returned from a country where the splendour of the native courts is supported in a state of almost fabulous magnificence, yet Sir Herbert, a he approached the palace, was not the less struck with the scene around

him. All was new to him, and drew forth exclamations of surprise and admiration. On one side his attention was excited by the squadron of Life Guards, drawn up with their fine band before the gates, and who, at a distance, might have been mistaken for a troop of elephants, had not the symmetry of their coal-black chargers, the warlike countenances of the soldiers, their glittering cuirasses, brilliant appointments, and noble appearance, dissipated the illusion. Myriads of well-dressed spectators and beautiful women paraded the adjacent streets, or filled the windows and balconies of the contiguous houses. Within the court appeared a fine body of the Foot Guards, in their long white gaiters and black knee-bands, and their musicians decked out in their gorgeous state clothing and quaint velvet caps. On the peristyle of the Palace the visitors were received by several servants of the household, remarkable for the perfect *ensemble* of their appearance, and, above all, for that obliging and attentive civility, so un-

usual in the domestics of the great, but so peculiarly characteristic of the benevolent and courteous manners of their illustrious master. Upon entering the great hall, Sir Herbert was met by a crowd of pages in their purple and gold uniforms; and upon his name being announced to the Master of the Ceremonies, he was conducted between two ranks of the Yeomen of the Guards, equipped in their original and singular costume, through a lane formed by the band of Gentlemen Pensioners, into the closet of the Prince, whose presence was there expected in a few minutes. Here the Baronet was presented by the President of the Board of Controul to several of the Ministers and Officers of State, who had the privilege of the *entrée*, or were assembled for the purpose of assisting at the ceremony of Sir Herbert's installation; and by whom he was received in a manner highly flattering. In a few minutes the folding-doors were thrown open, the buzz of conversation ceased, and the party retired towards the farther end

of the apartment; whispers of "The Regent! the Regent!" were heard, and his Royal Highness, preceded by the Chamberlains with their wands, and followed by the Household Officers, entered. However exalted might have been the Baronet's ideas of Royalty, however much he had been predisposed to admire the august Personage, in whose presence he found himself, yet his anticipations had fallen short of the reality; and for the first time in his life, his heart beat with mixed sensations of awe and admiration, to which it had hitherto been a stranger. Having been presented with the proper formalities by the Colonial Ministers, and having kissed hands, he was addressed by the Regent in that tone of urbanity and condescension, so peculiar to our Royal Family, so well calculated to reassure and encourage the stranger unaccustomed to the etiquette observed in the presence of the Sovereign. Courteousness devoid of familiarity, dignity without pride, ease and grace without negligence, marked the deport-

ment of the Prince, and sufficiently proved how just were the claims of that illustrious individual to the untranslateable title of the "First Gentleman of the World!"

After kindly shaking the Baronet by the hand, His Royal Highness congratulated and complimented him in the most gracious terms. Nothing was omitted which could flatter his honest vanity, or which was calculated to make him delighted with his Sovereign. Proud with himself, and pleased with his family, and in despite of Sir Herbert's anger against his son, a feeling of parental satisfaction swept across his mind, and almost brought a tear to his eye, as the Prince concluded, by saying with much feeling and energy, "I look upon this as a fortunate day, Sir Herbert Milton, on which I have the pleasure of conferring upon you this honour, in the name of your Sovereign, whose lamented absence we have still to deplore, and whom you have served with such zeal and fidelity; and I am still more pleased, Sir, at

having this occasion of not only expressing to you personally my sense of your services, but in being able to testify my approbation of your son's conduct: he is not only worthy of his ancestors, and the character of his father, but an ornament to His Majesty's service. You may be proud of him, Sir; and I trust that we shall both live to see the day, when his banner will be placed near your own, amongst those of the bravest, the best, and wisest of the nation."

Without waiting for an answer, His Royal Highness now proceeded to address himself to some of the *Corps Diplomatique*, leaving the Baronet almost overcome with sentiments of gratitude and delight.

Soon after this, the preparations for the Chapter being in readiness, Clarencieux, King-at-Arms, attended by Blanc Coursier, and followed by the Heralds, Pursuivants, and Officers of the Order of the Bath, entered the closet, arrayed in their tabards and collars, and bearing the necessary insignia; and the

installation of the Baronet was commenced with the usual formalities. Herbert, who was also to be presented on his promotion and return, had quitted his father, and turning to the right, proceeded through the suite of apartments to that of the throne, where those not having the *entrée* were assembling, in order to await the opening of the door of the cabinet, destined for the Prince's station during the approaching reception. Being nearly one of the first who had arrived, he was fortunate in obtaining an advanced place, and was thus enabled to take up an unturnable position in the embrasure of a window, and in this manner not only to escape the inconvenience, but to witness the scene of confusion passing around.

Nothing, certainly, could have a more uncourtly appearance, or be more out of keeping with the dignity and etiquette of the occasion, than this scene, not only from the extraordinary influx of persons, but from the violent efforts they made to press forward. A spec-

tator, a foreigner, for instance, unaccustomed to an English levée (*en masse*, as it has been called), could not avoid being shocked at witnessing such a *melée*, resembling more the riotous crowd rushing through the avenues of a theatre, than an assemblage of the nobles of the land congregating to pay their homage to their sovereign, within his own walls. However unpleasant this might have been to the actors, and unseemly to the spectator, yet it was not unattended by some laughable circumstances. Here, a little King's sergeant, in all the pomp and glory of a new silk gown and biforked wig, might be seen squeezed and hemmed in by three or four tall cavalry officers; his peruke entangled in the aiguilette of one, his legs embarrassed in the sword and sabretasche of a second; whilst his lips, which he had flattered himself were only destined to press the hand of the Prince, were pressed violently against the King's-arms embossed on the giberne of a third. There, a gaunt Scotch Knight of the Tower and Sword was

seen rising above the crowd, scraping the powder from the opposing heads with his gristly nose, or high cheek-bones, as he kept booing, or rather butting from the very entrance; but, with the characteristic of his country, eventually succeeding in obtaining a first and commodious position. Here, a school-boy ensign of grenadiers, almost enveloped in the wide flowing robes of some fat and portly prelate (his movements being only indicated by his raising a huge fur-cap above the crowd, or now and then putting forth a tiny hand above his head, like the drowning man in Poussin's Deluge), was endeavouring, after the example of Paris, to secure himself from absolute annihilation, by attacking the vulnerable toe of his spiritual extinguisher. There, a gallant captain of the navy, who never knew what it was to turn to man or breaker, was seen, endeavouring with his back to stem the tide of bag-wigs, epaulets, steel buttons, and cut velvet, which was fast carrying him astern: his brows dripping with

perspiration, a huge unutterable oath pent in between his teeth, his blue coat bespangled with melted powder, and his three-cornered hat bent, twisted, and converted into a hexagon. In the very thick of the onset, a tall, sallow East Indian, fresh from the banks of the Ganges, with a ghastly countenance, turning up his eyes with a look of despair, as he was carried off with irresistible force by a knot of sturdy country members, wishing himself, with all his soul, poor man! back on his quiet palanquin; and considering the black-hole at Calcutta, of which hitherto he had entertained such just horror, as a perfect type of ease, space, and free breathing, in comparison with his present situation. On another side, shone forth the astonished face of some fat and jovial major of local militia, bearing, imprinted on his circular cheek, that honorary distinction denied to his cap or his colours, from having had the said visage pressed in inextricable contact against the word "Peninsula," raised in relief in the brass plate of

some military man's helmet. Here were heard exclamations of "For God's sake! Sir, do not push!" It is a recochet from the very door itself,—"My Lord, I fear I trod upon you?" —"I should not have minded the other foot quite so much."—"Sir Thomas, this is worse than a rush of the Commons below the bar." —"Sir, you are on my shoe!"—"May I thank you, Colonel, to release my wig?"—"General, your feather a little out of my right eye."—In vain the master of the ceremonies bustled about, and endeavoured to arrest the progress of the mass; in vain was a door shut between the rooms, for, the instant it was again opened, in rushed a column like sheep in a fair darting from their pens; in vain the royal aides-de-camp attempted to clear the space contiguous to their station; as well might a *Llanero* in the savannas of Colombia have laid by his *laço* and whistled to a herd of wild horses;—lords, bishops, commoners, generals, and mariners hustled and crushed one another, in a way that might have done credit to a

party assembling on the Lord Mayor's day at the Mansion-house.

"How d'ye do, Colonel Milton?" exclaimed a shattered old courtier, who had escaped from the tumult, leaving one ruffle hanging on the hilt of a dragoon's sword, and a part of his Valenciennes' frill entangled in the epaulet of an admiral; "let me, for God's sake! take refuge by you. Upon my honour, this is too much to be pleasant; one must give up coming to Court, if a stop is not put to such gross proceedings."

"It would be a vast relief if a great many others would make the same determination," replied Herbert.

"Ah!" returned the other, "it was very different in old times. What, in the world, brings all these people here? faces one never saw or heard of: I am sure his Royal Highness must wish them half at the devil."

"To judge of some of them, they look as if they were there already," said a third gentleman, joining them.

"Whatever the Prince may think, he is certainly too kind to evince any ill humour: why half the people who come are put to their wits' end to find any pretext for their appearance, which they may stick on their cards."

"What reason can they have?" exclaimed the elder personage.

"Some," said the other, "are bears, and some bear-leaders, on the point of adding to the list of quizzes, who are the cause of our being caricatured from the Straits of Gibraltar to the Dardanelles; others think it necessary to come here, that they may have right to shew their vulgar faces and tasteless volunteer uniform at some foreign court, and heaven send them a speedy *exeat Regno!*"

"Really a line should be drawn, Sir," rejoined the first; "if it goes on in this way, his Royal Highness might as well hold his levee in Covent Garden market."

"If you wish a line drawn," answered the other, "recommend them to Ali Pacha; for a few sequins he would make short work of it."

"I rather think," observed Herbert, "that it would be an easier matter for Ali of Janina to cut off a dozen heads, than for his Royal Highness to diminish the numbers who are desirous to pay him homage; though, I grant you, that there are too many here who have no earthly excuse for coming; but how are you to separate the grain from the chaff in a country like this, where every man with an independent fortune, or indeed with a coat on his back, considers himself quite as much entitled to appear at Court as you, or any nobleman in the land?"

"Oh," said the other, "he might commence a reform; by stating that he can dispense with seeing the same faces twice in one year, and that there is no occasion for a man being presented more than once, on his marriage; he might very civilly hint that there was no necessity for their coming here every time they chose to run to the Continent or return from it."

"By-the-bye," said Herbert, addressing the

courtier, "in former days, it was, I believe, His Majesty's custom to receive much more frequently, which may account for the levée being so crowded at present; besides, the navy and army have been augmented tenfold, which of itself is a sufficient reason for the increase of numbers."

"It is a pity His Royal Highness does not adopt the plan of receiving oftener, as you justly observe was the case with His Majesty," exclaimed the courtier, who was proverbial for having scarcely ever missed a court since the King's accession.

"By George!" retorted the younger gentleman, "I think the Prince is quite right to knock off as many as he can at once, like the duck-shooters in the Southampton waters. It must be no joke to have seven or eight hundred parched lips, scratching your hand one after the other for hours together."

"You had better recommend his Royal Highness to establish a new office—no sinecure, by-the-bye—and appoint some one to

perform that part of the ceremony by proxy for him. What think you of being made 'Receiver of Kisses to his Majesty?'"

"I should have no sort of objection," replied the other, "to perform that office at a drawing-room, provided I might appoint a deputy to do the work of the senior female department."

This conversation was now put a stop to by a slight noise at the folding-doors, which were at length thrown open: the grooms-in-waiting taking their station on either side the entrance, and the lord of the bed-chamber near the person of his Royal Highness, to announce the names. Silence being at length established, only now and then interrupted by an exclamation of a loud "Oh! my toe!" as the wooden-leg of a veteran chose its *point d'appui* on the gouty foot of a dean, or perhaps a loud sneeze as the tail of a barrister's wig dropped into the uplifted nostril of some little alderman; the crowd commenced filtering through the cabinet, where the Prince had

taken up his station with his back to the wall, the royal family, ministers, ambassadors, and great officers opposite to him, forming, as it were, a lane, through which it was necessary for each individual to pass, as he knelt to make his obeisance. The Regent's reception of Colonel Milton was not less flattering than that accorded to his father. His Royal Highness inquired most kindly after his wounds, appeared to be acquainted with every circumstance attending his adventure, praised his bravery, congratulated him on his return, and added, "No one would have more sincerely deplored that event, had it terminated fatally, than myself. We can at this period ill-afford to lose brave men, and I should have felt your loss doubly, both as a private and public calamity." A kind and gracious bow hinted that Herbert might now proceed, and having quitted the presence by the opposite door at which he entered, he joined his father, and in a few minutes they were on their return to Berkeley-square. The

Baronet was not only highly gratified at the reception he had met with, but the encomiums uttered by the Regent, as well as by others, on his son, made considerable impression on his mind, and he began to imagine that he might perhaps have judged too severely of him. In short, he felt so well inclined towards Herbert, that had it not been for the detestable intrigue and double-dealing of Alfred, the events we have yet to narrate would not have occurred, and the union of Emily and Herbert might have taken place in due season, to the universal joy and satisfaction of every person concerned.

CHAPTER IV.

Miss Manby returned from Mrs. Belleroche's party in a state of great agitation, rendered still more poignant by the receipt of Lady Milton's note. It was a vain and useless effort to attempt any longer to deceive herself, as to the real state of Sir Herbert's feelings toward her. All hope of obtaining his consent vanished from her mind, and the idea of surreptitiously forcing herself into his family, revolted her heart. Her sentiments were not actuated by any selfish feelings, since the sacrifice she must make would be dreadful. There arose the severest struggle in her mind, between the misery of rejecting one whom she tenderly loved—the first, the only being, who had ever inspired her bosom with that sentiment, and the fearful thought of for ever blasting his prospects, and disuniting his family. To Sir Herbert Milton she was

bound by no ties; she was herself independent; she had no one to control her, no one who had the smallest claim upon her obedience; but the duty she owed herself, the real affection she felt for the welfare of her lover, overcame all other considerations, and the generous, noble-minded girl was not long in adopting the resolution of offering up her own happiness, her own long cherished affection, to her sense of rectitude. The following day was passed in discussing this subject with Mrs. Walden, who did not hesitate to encourage to the utmost of her power the laudable intentions of her young friend. It was decided she should write to Herbert, whose letter from St. James's had already reached Park-lane, ere she had assumed courage to adopt the step which was to separate her from him for ever. This letter added fresh agony to her feelings, and it was with a heart bursting almost with conflicting emotions, that she sat down to write the following lines:—

" Park-lane.

" I implore you by every thing most sacred, by your affection for me, by your duty to your parents, by all that is due to yourself, to abandon every idea of a union with the unhappy, the wretched Emily. It must not—cannot be! Heaven appears to interpose between us. Never will I consent to be the cause of an eternal rupture between you and your father: never shall that father have it in his power to declare that I have been instrumental in bringing down a parent's malediction on his child; of mining the peace of his family, and destroying the prospects of that child for ever. Most sincerely do I believe that you are indifferent to the splendour of rank and fortune;—your attachment to me, your long tried and faithful affection for an unknown orphan, has sufficiently proved the noble disinterestedness of your nature. This conviction adds agony to the sacrifice I am called upon to make. Fondly, most fondly did I look forward to that period when I

might have been permitted to devote my existence to the proofs of my gratitude: but I am awakened from the dream; and although my life be the price of the effort, it must be consummated. Try not, I beseech you, to dissuade me from my purpose; attempt not to alter my resolution, it is irrevocable! We must not meet again! I will not ask you to forget me! but let me live in your memory like the recollection of some dear departed friend, torn from you for ever. I have been—I am the child of misfortune! Oh! would that it had been the will of Providence, that I should have shared the same fearful grave with my unhappy parents! How much misery might have been spared to us both! Adieu! adieu for ever! Write not;—I cannot, dare not—receive your letter!"

When Herbert reached his lodgings, he eagerly inquired if there were any letters for him: being answered in the affirmative, he dismissed his valet, and hurrying to his apart-

ment, perceived amongst several cards and notes of invitation, the well-known hand-writing of Emily. Seized, as it were, with a sudden presentiment, his hand trembled violently, his whole frame shook, and some moments elapsed ere he had resolution to break the seal. His feelings may in some degree be imagined when he perused the contents. Throwing himself on the sofa in an agony of emotion and despair, he gave way to the intensity of his feelings.

"This is too much! she shall consent, or my blood be on her head!" exclaimed the impassioned young man, as again he arose. "It is not thus that I will be sacrificed, cast off for ever! I will see her! she cannot refuse her door: if she does, she shall not pass her threshold, without making a stepping-stone of my body!"

These words Herbert uttered with almost frenzied accents, and then, after pacing rapidly up and down the room, he seized his epn, wrote a few lines, tore them, again

wrote, and once more destroyed what he had written; then starting from his chair, he exclaimed aloud, "No, no! she may have the courage to return my letter; she cannot have the cruelty to refuse to see me—I will go this instant." Then ringing his bell, he hastily cast aside his uniform, dressed himself rapidly, and was on the point of hurrying down stairs, when Captain Sidney was announced. In a moment the kind-hearted Sidney perceived by Herbert's manner that some untoward event had taken place.

"Herbert, my dear fellow!" said the former, "you are not well; for God's sake! what has happened?—speak, can I be of any service to you? Your father is arrived, I hear; has any thing occurred between you to render you thus unhappy?"

"Every thing has happened that could combine to make me the veriest wretch alive; —read those letters." And then putting both Lady Milton and Emily's epistles into his hand;—Sidney's gaiety was quickly arrested,

and he soon became almost as sorrowful as his friend, especially when the latter briefly narrated the substance of what had passed within the last two days.

"I do not ask your advice, Sidney," said Colonel Milton, "for, in the first place, I am scarcely in a fit state to listen to reason, and in the next, my mind is firmly fixed; no argument, no threats, no opposition, can divert my intentions."

"If that is the case," answered the other, "it would be of little use for me to intrude my opinions upon you; indeed, I have more than once perceived that every attempt to reason with a man in love, is as superfluous as endeavouring to argue with one that has drunk too much champagne;—but," added Sidney, "most earnestly do I implore you to allow a few days to pass ere you take those steps on which you appear bent."

"Not an hour, if I can prevent it," retorted Herbert; "my patience is exhausted: to remain in this state another week would be

worse than death. Sidney, you have never loved, you have never felt as I do! You, too, are your own master: it is well for you to reason and talk of postponement; but were you in my place—"

"I never would have the folly to act from the first impulse," returned Sidney. "I entreat you to remember, my dear fellow, that you are about to sacrifice your birth-right, your very existence, your duty to your father, and your affection to your mother, and for what? for love,—love that comes and goes like the sun-beams in April. Alfred was perfectly right in trying to persuade you to give her up; he is more honest than I gave him credit for. Why, in fact, she here sets you the example."

"It is a sacrifice she makes for me, a painful sacrifice, as you perceive by her letter; and should I be outdone in generosity? why should I alone permit mercenary considerations to influence my heart? No! I swear it!—my resolution is taken, nothing can shake it!"

'I am very sorry to hear it," answered Sidney; "I like a show of determination and consistency as well as any man, but on my honour, this is carrying matters too far. Be persuaded to wait a few months, things may come round. The governor, after all, cannot be made of such unmeltable stuff as you imagine: he may relent; and then, if he does not, why you can but run away after all. Hang it! give the old boy a chance, he will find out in time that he has been rather hard upon you. Write to her *en attendant*—swear you never will give her up;—then get leave for six months, and make a campaign with the Russians; if, after that, you continue resolved, and she unmarried, why then I will say amen! and help you to carry her off.—But," continued Sidney, "I should be unworthy of your friendship did I not entreat you to pause. I may be considered a thoughtless dog, but I have at least sense enough to try to catch my friend by the skirts, when I see him standing on the brink of a precipice."

"I most gratefully feel your kindness," replied Herbert, "and give you credit for much more prudence and discretion than you seem inclined to allow yourself; but I am determined not to be exceeded by Emily in sacrificing every other consideration to one object."

"For that matter, you may set your mind at rest," replied Sidney, incautiously: "and think only of yourself; Seabridge would jump at the idea of marrying her under any circumstances; and between ourselves, Berty, I see nothing more probable, than that such an event should take place; and certainly there would be no great sacrifice in giving up the prospect of Milton-park (putting yourself out of the question) for Seabridge-hall and a peerage."

"Not whilst I live, by Heavens!" exclaimed Herbert, taking fire at the last expressions of his friend, which were intended to produce a far different effect. "'Sdeath! Sidney—the idea alone adds a thousand stings

to the bitterness of my feelings! But no more, I beg; waste not your words, for I am determined."

In vain did Sidney use every entreaty and argument to dissuade his friend; in vain did he essay every persuasion that friendship or prudence could dictate, until at last abandoning all farther attempts, he concluded by saying, "You may rely upon my inviolable secrecy; and should you succeed in persuading her to marry you, I am completely of Alfred's opinion, that you had better not communicate your intention to Sir Herbert, or, indeed, to any other person: the less such things are talked of by the world, the better; and certainly it would be most unwise, indeed I should say insulting to your father, to declare to his face that you do not care a straw for his injunctions, and that, *coute qui coute*, you are bent upon setting him at defiance, and gratifying your own inclinations. But now," continued Sidney, "if you will spare me a moment, I will communicate some

circumstances respecting myself, which will, I trust, afford you pleasure."

Notwithstanding Herbert's impatience to hasten to Park-lane, he told his friend, that, next to the subject nearest his heart, that which concerned Sidney's welfare and happiness was the most interesting to him. "Proceed, therefore, and if I can assist you in any way, you know me: though," added he, "a wretch like myself must entail misfortune upon all who approach him."

"Well," said Sidney, "in the first place, let me tell you that I feel rather queer—it has not been quite right with me for the last three months—I have not recovered the fall I got at Dropmore's."

"Hitherto you have not complained," answered Herbert; "it was very imprudent of you to hunt so much afterwards—pray take advice, consult Rose. You have, perhaps, received some internal injury—do take advice."

"To expect me to listen to your recommendation after the cavalier manner in which

you treated mine," rejoined Sidney, smiling, "is rather unreasonable; but to shew that I am not so obstinate as some of my friends, I will tell you I have already anticipated your counsel, having taken an opinion on my case; and it is decided that I can only meet with a cure at the same spot where I received my injury. My physician, also, is a Rose, *mais c'est un bouton.*"

"Your answer is a complete enigma," returned Herbert; "what can be your meaning?"

"Why, I believe it has rendered me a little poetical and flowery. I shall, by degrees, drop slang, and take to purism; I suppose the change is incidental to my complaint."

Herbert stared with increased surprise.

"You think I am crazed, do you not, Berty?" continued his friend; "do not, however, be alarmed when I tell you that I am in love! horribly, detestably, over head and ears in sincere, genuine love! and what is more, going to be married!"

I should as soon have believed that you

had renounced Newmarket or hunting!" exclaimed Colonel Milton.

"The turf for ever!" rejoined Sidney: "a *sine qua non* with the papa-in-law; it cost me a twinge, but I must stick to hunting, were it merely out of gratitude for throwing a wife in my way."

"I wish you joy, with all my soul!" rejoined Herbert, with a look of melancholy, as if his own miserable feelings were increased by the happiness of his friend; "but who is the person,—how came you also to conceal your intentions from me so long?"

"Why the fact is," returned Sidney, "I was not certain whether I was quite serious, until last week. Moreover, I did not exactly know how matters stood with the parchments, or whether the lady would say, Nay, or her papa, Yea. However, it is all right: I am fixed as a needle to the Pole, and the dear little personage actually shed a tear when I took leave of her yesterday; and, egad, Herbert! I never thought before, that any one but yourself ever considered me

worthy of one. I made rather a fool also of myself at parting—and here I am, metamorphosed into as grave and solemn an animal, as if I had married as many wives as the postman."

"Long may you live to enjoy your happiness! but, in the mean time, who is the lady?"

"True! I forgot that part of the story;—do not quiz me, and I will tell you. Come, who do you guess?"

"Heaven knows!" answered Colonel Milton, "perhaps one of the Lady Bossvilles."

"Phu! I would as soon think of devoting the rest of my days to sip vinegar out of a tea-kettle. Come, Berty, give me credit for a better taste."

"One of the Misses Bramble, then? You paid them a good deal of attention, I hear, last spring."

"I thought the attentions were on their side," replied Sidney; "no, that will not do, you might as well accuse me of hunting a bag fox with the Putney hounds. No, the old girl may carry them about from Milton to

Atherstone, and thence to every cover side in England; marry them who will—not I—one hates to be crammed like a turkey or Strasbourg goose!"

"Oh!" said Herbert, "I have it! it is one of the Dropmores—the youngest, the merry, laughing little thing, who can take a five-barred gate as boldly as yourself."

"A sweet seat on a horse, certainly—but you are still wrong. It is Mary, the eldest—the grave, sedate, and, of course, I think, beautiful Mary, Miss Manby's most intimate friend."

"God grant that both of them may be equally fortunate! Your good taste, Harry, and your good luck, run neck and neck, as you would say."

"Yes, my dear fellow, I rather flatter myself you are right. I may affirm, that when I got the tumble which confined me for a month at Dropmore's, I fell on my legs; but bless me! it is wicked for a Benedict to make a pun."

"Happy, happy fellow!" said Herbert, shaking his friend by the hand.

"Why, not quite so excessively happy as you might imagine," replied Sidney, "for now comes the twitch."

"I trust nothing has occurred to throw any impediments in your way. It is my fate, that all who attach themselves to me should be subject to share, as it were, in my ill fortune."

"My dear fellow, you have nothing to do with it, inasmuch as I was merely brought up by express from Merryford, by an order to prepare *instanter* for foreign service—a very pretty *cadeau de noces.* Now much as I admire the pomp of war, in a quiet way and at a proper season, yet, on my word, I feel a terrible inclination to give them all a slip. However, Mary—you see I am getting into training—Mary advises me first to do the proper thing by joining the brigade for a short time, and if matters take a peaceable turn, to get leave, or send in my resignation; and

I hope the former, for Lord Wellington, I hear, now and then consents to give leave upon occasions of this nature;—I suppose he looks upon wedlock as the nearest possible approach to fighting. So, in fact, my dear Herbert, I am off as soon as I can get ready, and in the course of a few weeks I hope to return, and then—off she goes! hearts, tarts, and plum-cakes! By-the-bye, have you got any 'old copies' of love-letters? I never wrote one in my life, and we are to correspond."

Herbert applauded his friend's honourable resolution of proceeding to join his battalion ere he resigned; and after another unsuccessful attempt on the part of Sidney to dissuade Colonel Milton from his purpose, the two young men separated, and the latter hastened to Park-lane.

Upon his arriving at the door, and inquiring for Miss Manby, Herbert's surprise and vexation were excited to the utmost, on being informed by the servants that she had quitted town early that morning with Mrs. Walden,

without leaving word where they were gone; but that directions had been given to forward all letters to Kendal: and that they believed their mistress was on a tour to the Lakes of Cumberland. Herbert was moreover informed, that the upholsterer had received orders to let the house for the season, and that they did not expect the family back for some months.

The wild and confused look with which Colonel Milton received this intelligence, his pale face and agitated manner, immediately struck the servant, who requested Colonel Milton would enter and repose himself.

After having partially recovered, he hastened towards the residence of his cousin, whom, however, he met entering the Park in his cabriolet. In a moment Herbert was seated by his side, and immediately communicated to him Emily's letter and her abrupt departure. To avoid as much as possible the throng, Alfred drove rapidly down the King's Road, cautiously watching his cousin's coun-

tenance, and determining to wait until the latter should, in some measure, explain his intentions.

"I shall return home with some excuse to my father, and follow her immediately," exclaimed Herbert. "Have you heard where Seabridge is gone?"

"Yes," replied his cousin: "I met Lord Lymington last night, and I understood that his son started yesterday morning for the North, on election business. By-the-bye," added Alfred, "that is rather an odd coincidence."

"What, what?" demanded Herbert, eagerly.

"Oh, nothing, nothing, my good fellow, only I think you said Miss Manby's letters are to be addressed to Kendal."

Alfred saw that this shaft had struck the very centre of the mark, and stuck rankling in his cousin's heart.

"I shall throw myself into the mail this evening," replied Herbert; "and if, indeed, his intentions are what you seem to hint at,

we must settle the matter in a way that cannot but terminate fatally to one of us."

"Upon my word, Herbert, I think you will then act most unwisely. If it is her wish to marry him, let her do so in God's name, and you will have a fortunate escape."

"I will first hear the fact from her own lips, before I resign her," answered Herbert; "nothing shall deter me from following her forthwith. I have now a favour to ask: can you not accompany me? Sidney is going abroad immediately, and there is no other person whom I can trust."

"My dear Herbert," replied his cousin, "nothing would have given me so much pleasure: but in the first place, I do not approve of your going to cut Seabridge's throat, because it is possible that Miss Manby may have given him a rendezvous at Gretna."

"I do not ask you," replied Herbert, angrily, "to make any comments on Miss Manby; it is enough that you decline attending

me. I suppose you also have been won over by my father?"

"You do me great injustice," returned Alfred, with an affectation of deep feeling; "it is in your own interest that I speak. Am I not engaged to accompany Sir Herbert to visit his constituents, and thence to meet his agents at Milton Park? What excuse can I make to him? Will he not discover that we are gone to the North together? will he not immediately guess at our intentions? Do you wish to ruin me as well as yourself? If you have lost your senses, let me think a little for you."

"You are right, Alfred; I have indeed lost my reason," replied Herbert, mournfully.

"Another thing must be remembered," observed Alfred: "did not your father positively desire you would go with him to the ball to-morrow evening."

"I go to a ball! why you must indeed entertain an extraordinary opinion of me. Is my mind in a fit state for balls?"

"Well, then," answered Alfred, pettishly,

"if you are resolved to reject all advice, and follow your own inclinations, let us drive at once to your father, and tell him your determination: you seem so indifferent as to what may happen, that you will not perhaps mind insulting him to his face; and most richly will you deserve it, if he casts you out of the house for ever. I never heard of such wilful imprudence."

"But a day lost may blight my hopes for ever."

"If a day can induce Miss Manby to alter her sentiments, or at all events to accept Seabridge; if she can cast you off, and marry him forthwith, as she would change her dress; why she is not worth a thought. That she may accept him in due time, is quite another thing."

"It matters not, Alfred, I have made up my mind."

"Do you wish all London as well as your father to know it?"

"Certainly not."

"Well, then, I once more beg of you, if you wish to pay the old gentleman a last mark of respect, or if you care for the success of your project, attend him this evening, and the moment we are departed for ——, you may then slip off for Kendal; but you know my opinion of the whole business."

"All I ask then of you is not to betray me; if Emily consents to our union, we will immediately return, and implore his forgiveness."

Alfred shortly after set his cousin down in Berkeley-square, Herbert having previously declared his intention of following his advice, and remaining for the entertainment. As the immediate discovery of the intended marriage, should it take place, must be a matter of importance, Alfred calculated that he should escape detection by this feeble show of resistance to his cousin's wishes, and that he might call upon Herbert himself, as a proof that he had done all in his power to induce the former to renounce his intentions. Every

thing had hitherto proceeded as he had desired, and promised ultimate success; and he consoled himself with the idea of having so far ingratiated himself into the good opinion of Sir Herbert, that, let the issue of his scheme be what it might, he must at all events profit by it. During this and the following day, Herbert passed a considerable time with his father, but it may be imagined with what miserable sensations he entered the carriage to accompany Sir Herbert and Lady Milton, and how little able he was to enjoy the gay and splendid scene which awaited his arrival.

CHAPTER V.

THE exterior arrangements for the *fête* at Carlton House were nearly on the same scale as those of the previous day, rendered still more brilliant by the floods of light which streamed from the numerous burners and fire-sockets, placed round the palace, which reflected and heightened the splendour as they danced and glittered on the golden uniforms and burnished arms of the Guards and attendants. The illumination within the building was most splendid, myriads of lights sparkled in the magnificent crystal chandeliers, shining on the beautiful furniture, the noble pictures, the rare bronzes, and costly marbles, which adorned the apartments; whilst the beauty of the ladies' dresses, glittering with gems and precious stones, the rich and varied costume of the gentle-

men, combined with the most perfect order and well-bred etiquette (far different from the previous day's confusion), gave to the scene that air of grandeur and decorum, without unnecessary stiffness or formality, which bespoke the vicinity of the princely owner. The Miltons had arrived at the Palace before the royal party made their appearance, and Sir Herbert, whose eyes had been employed in examining the faces of the ladies present with marked curiosity, at length whispered in Alfred's ear, "Is she here?"

"No, Sir," replied the other; "I think I understood from some one, that she has left town for a few days, on a visit to Lady Anne Dropmore:—you know," added he, "that the world says she is to marry Lord Seabridge."

"An excellent match! I am heartily glad to hear it, though it is the first time that it has come to my knowledge," answered the Baronet, evidently much pleased at a report which relieved him from some portion of his anxiety respecting his son. "Do you think,"

added he, "that there is a probability of its taking place?"

"The greatest, Sir. I know that Lord Lymington is extremely anxious that she should consent to accept his son, who has, I have no doubt, left London to renew the proposal he made some time past; and I should imagine that there is little probability of her refusing him a second time, especially as she will be aware you will not consent to her union with Herbert."—Their conversation was now broken off by the party which had hitherto been scattered over the vast saloon, retiring towards the walls, so as to form a deep circle.

The Master of the Ceremonies, with several Pages and Officers of the Household, were seen bustling through the adjacent apartments; the voices which had been loud in conversation, now died away into faint whispers, or complete silence; and in a few seconds her Majesty made her appearance, supported on the arm of the Regent, and

followed by several of her august family: amongst the most conspicuous of whom was the Duke of York leading his royal niece. This was the first time that her Majesty had attended a *fête* of this nature since the lamented malady of her Royal Consort.

Her Majesty having graciously addressed a few words to each person as she moved round the circle, recognising almost every individual, and saying something kind and flattering to each, which, if accidentally omitted by her, was immediately compensated by the unaffected affability and kindness of her royal daughters, was conducted to an elevated Dais, or Throne, which had been erected in the ball-room, that she might without inconvenience witness the gay scene around her. The sound of the music now announced the commencement of the ball; and after one or two English country-dances, a wish was expressed by the Queen to see a quadrille, which in those days was as great a rarity, and looked upon as a performance not

less miraculous than Madame Saqui's *entre-chats* on the tight-rope.

The Royal host, who appeared to be as well informed as to the saltary powers of the guests, as he was with their more sedate and useful qualities, selected Herbert, with two or three other young men, to make a quadrille.

His Royal Highness immediately led into the centre of the room one of the many young ladies who stood trembling and twittering near their mammas, half dreading to exhibit their steps, half ashamed, or vexed at the idea of not being one of the elect. Considering the nervous feelings of the performers, at the idea of exhibiting in the presence of such august spectators, and the novelty of the attempt, the dance was concluded, without any severe mistake, and the Queen not only expressed her pleasure at the performance, but, having made a signal to Lady Milton, complimented her particularly on that of her son. Herbert now retired from the circle, and after joining Madame de Geigenklang, he walked with her

into one of the adjoining apartments, when he communicated to her all that had passed, and frankly avowed his own intentions. "I shall leave town to-morrow morning early; and unless Miss Manby is determined to reject me for ever, I shall be married and return in ten days, and do all I can to soften my father. If she will not consent, then, my dear Baroness, I shall go abroad immediately, and God knows what will become of me!"

The Baroness, who really felt sincerely for Herbert, was fully as much inclined to yield to her feelings of sorrow, as himself; but she suppressed her own sentiments, and answered gaily, "To-morrow! leave town to-morrow: what, on the night of my party? impossible! my dear; you were engaged to me long before you ever thought of Emily. I shall have Ghebor, the Hungarian, with his *cor de basette*, the two new Italian Buffos, and merely a small party of *Scelte*, just what you like. I think I have arranged the Cavatina from the Donna in Bernal in a way that will delight you. Then

I have altered the Venetian air to suit your voice."

"Impossible! my dear Baroness; it is essential that I should follow Miss Manby immediately; my suspense must be put an end to. Are you aware that Seabridge has left town under the pretence of looking out for Moors?"

"Lord! my dear," replied the Baroness, "if he had waited until next week, he might have seen a dozen in the *Italiani in Algieri*. By-the-bye, I hear all the Opera people are fighting about the *partition* of the characters."

"Who knows," said Herbert, "what may be the result of my meeting with Lord Seabridge? I certainly shall not quietly submit to any attentions from him to Miss Manby."

"What! jealous? Do not be jealous, it is a horrid vice, I detest jealous people; if the Baron were jealous, *Gran' Dio! je le ferois trotter*, but he is a dear, good creature, and never plagues me. But are you really serious?

is there to be a *matrimonio segreto?* what excellent fun! dear me, I wish I could accompany:—by-the-bye, what an excellent thing to introduce into our Opera; Vulcan as high-priest, a chorus of friars and bride's-maids. But, my dear, if you are to be married by that dirty blacksmith, you will have no bride's-maids, no *fleurs d'orange*, no lace veils,—what will Gunter think of your not ordering cake?"

"Pray be serious for one moment," answered Herbert.

"So I am," continued the lady; "but are you really so? I have often heard of lovers dying, but I never saw one, except Romeo; and, by the way, I really hope Canta Gallo, who played it the other night, did not come to life again; I trust that he is now *solfeggiando* with Pluto. Life for life, he assassinated Rossini. *Apropos*, have you heard that Lady Catesby and her husband have had a tremendous *scena*."

"No; what care I about Lady Catesby?

If she were as dead as Romeo, I should not regret her."

"Well! but you must hear me; she said she would, and he said she should not—"

"What, what?" exclaimed Herbert pettishly.

"If you get into a passion, my dear, I shall leave: you put one in mind of the frescoes of *Amor Furioso* and *Amor Geloso:—Ascolta!* She would go to the play in a private box with Lord Taunton, *questo bestia;* the *marito* said no—she ran down stairs—he followed, caught her by the hair—she kicked his legs, scratched his face, and bit his finger, and then fainted with fury."

"For Heaven's sake! do not talk to me about the odious woman, when my mind is so tortured with other subjects."

"If you are as much tormented, as I was to hear Lord Taunton sing '*Cara per te quest' anima,*' I pity you; and then daring to make me accompany him, *qual martiro!* jumbling flats and sharps, crotchets and quavers to

gether! No voice, no taste, no music,—he really deserves to flirt with the Cat."

"One moment be serious," again observed Herbert; "life and death perhaps depend on the events of the next few days. I see you are not in a disposition to listen to me: you promised me your friendship and assistance, all I now implore is your secrecy."

"Do not ask me to be serious," rejoined the Baroness, "though my heart is really breaking for you. No, my dear, you are quite miserable enough without my encouraging you to become more so; but," added the Baroness gravely, "have you well considered this matter? I am not going to sermonize or advise,—that is the most ungrateful office when people are in love. I never could bear those persons who interfered and advised me when the Baron *me faceva la corte*, though I dare say they meant very well; but I will tell you, Herbert, that I have had a long conversation with Lady Milton, and I must entreat you not to undertake any thing yet. Wait, wait a few

months; why even Alfred advises this! By-the-bye, I am rather angry with your cousin, he has deceived me completely as to your father. However much I may enjoy amusement and fun, yet I am neither so weak nor so unfeeling, as to encourage two people whom I love so much, in an attachment which would meet with such determined opposition."

"When once we are married," answered Herbert, "I feel convinced my father will forgive me; and should he not do so at first, he cannot surely resist for any length of time."

"After what your mother has told me, I see no prospect of his consenting or relenting; it would make me very wretched to see you both unhappy. Oh, dear! there would be an end to all duets; but I should be still more miserable were I to urge you to your own ruin. Alfred is too bad to have deceived me!

"Could he, could any human being have supposed that my father would continue so obstinate? but no more on this point. With

Alfred I am perfectly satisfied; he has done every thing in his power to assist me."

"My house, all I possess, is at Emily's command; come to Beau Regard, you can there pass your honey-moon. You are aware of my affection for her; and there, child! do not be vain, I am a little cross with her for carrying you off. Lord! there is your father looking as grim as if he could eat us both!"

They were now interrupted by a lady and her daughter, who approached the Baroness, exclaiming, "How d'ye do, my dear Baroness, how charmingly you are looking! so happy to see you! what a sweet necklace that is! always such admirable taste! what a darling bracelet!"

"Hem! I'm glad you like it," replied the other, determined to repay her admirer, whom she hated, in her own coin; "but you know, my dear Lady Sweetly, you run away with all the pretty things in town. I never saw any thing in good taste at Kitchen's that was not copied from something of yours."

"Oh, my dear Baroness! you are so kind to admire my trumpery! Yes, I have two or three little things. Sir Peter says he likes to see me *parée.* I do not care about it myself! By-the-bye, what a delicious treat was your last music-party! divine singing! How is the dear Baron? not fatigued I hope, with his exertions? what a dear sweet dear instrument his bassoon!"

"You accompanied, as usual, *à ravir.* That dear duo which you sang with Fiaschoni was exquisite!" added the younger lady! "how I should like to hear it again!"

"A pretty broad hint for to-morrow," thought the Baroness to herself, "but I am not to be caught. It was a quartet," answered she, "I did not sing a duet all the night."

"Oh, but I paid no attention to any body's voice but yours," replied the elder, with great readiness; "*apropos,* do you know that sweet dear creature, the Princess Nasovitch?"

"Sweet!" exclaimed the Baroness; "it

appears you do not know her; you may as well call her friend, Mr. Altdorf, handsome. I observe she never casts her eyes at him, and he always turns his nose away from her; it is the most extraordinary *dos-à-dos* love-making I ever saw."

"Oh, mamma," said Miss Sweetly, "have you brought the little Sicilian airs that Augustus sent from Palermo for the dear Baroness?"

"What a shocking memory I have!" exclaimed her Ladyship; "I forgot them, but I will send them early in the morning."

"Oh, how naughty of you to forget them, mamma! I am so cross with you!" exclaimed Miss Sweetly, attempting to give to her milk-and-water countenance an expression of anger.

"Oh, my love," replied the mamma, "if the Baroness will receive you to-morrow morning, I can set you down whilst I am shopping, and you can then sing them to her. Dear Augustus says they are the sweetest morsels he ever heard."

"Ah, dear me! I am afraid I must ask them," said the Baroness to herself, "or I shall never get the music. Nasty bores!" Then graciously smiling, she added, "I shall not be at home to-morrow morning; but if you can come to-morrow night, I have a few people."

"My dear Baroness," replied the two ladies, "we shall be delighted! Your music-parties are really such a perfect treat; but," added she, "Julia would give worlds to go to the Princess Nasovitch's ball; do not you think you can manage it? I am sure any one of the dear Royal Dukes would get one there directly, they admire Julia so much: they think her dancing and singing perfection!"

"An admirable proof of their taste!" answered Madame de Geigenklang, leaving Lady Sweetly to construe her reply as she chose, well knowing that the Regent himself mimicked to admiration the horrible bobbing of Miss Sweetly, as she jerked through the air, with her large feet and long arms; and

that the Duke of ——— caricatured her singing, which was always too flat or too sharp by half a tone at least—that her high notes set one's teeth on edge, her low notes had all the effect of bad *vin du pays*, and her shakes made one shiver for a week.

"Oh, mamma," exclaimed Miss Sweetly, who perceived the Baroness's hesitation, "how can you bore the dear Baroness! Do ask one of the Royal Dukes; I do not think that darling Duke of ——— would refuse me any thing."

"What a charming method of being introduced!" rejoined Madame de Geigenklang; "there is the Duke of ——— approaching, I recommend you to ask him, for in truth I am not sufficiently acquainted with the Princess to take so great a liberty with her."

As His Royal Highness advanced, Lady Sweetly and her daughter retired, and the Duke, after the usual salutation, said, "Who is that walking Golconda you were talking to just now?"

"Oh, I thought she had the honour of being known to your Royal Highness?"

"I never saw her before that I am aware of," rejoined the Prince.

"That is very unfortunate, Sir; for she had built her hopes on your Royal Highness's getting her asked to the Princess Nasovitch's ball."

"On me!" rejoined the good-natured Prince, laughing, "upon my word, though I have not the honour of knowing your friend, yet I should be very happy to get her invited; but I scarcely am acquainted with the Princess herself."

The Baroness could not avoid laughing at this exposure of the lady's pretensions to intimacy with the Royal Family.

"I guessed as much, Sir, from her sliding off when your Royal Highness approached."

The Duke joined in the laugh, and then added—"It is the strangest thing! people mistake me for a patent master-key to all the houses in town; they imagine, I suppose, that

I have a *carte blanche* to invite whom, when, and where, I please; I wish I had, by Gad! for their sakes."

"People, Sir," rejoined the Baroness, "who have neither delicacy nor feeling, attempt to take advantage of your Royal Highness's condescension; and permit themselves liberties which they could scarcely venture with their equals."

"No, no! you are too severe," answered the Duke, in the kindest manner; "they merely give me credit for an extent of influence which I do not possess."

"Do not be angry, Sir," replied the Baroness, "but the fact is, they well know that your Royal Highness is so universally beloved, that you have but to express a wish, and all London would be delighted to gratify it."

"Come, come, no flattery! Do you think, with the rest of the world, that is the only food which is palatable to us? I only know, that were I to exchange places with you or any

other person who gave parties, and were you to ask me for an invitation, I should wish you at the deuce, that is all—because your request would be considered an order. I am so well aware of this, that, unless under very extraordinary circumstances, I make it a rule never to place myself in such an unpleasant position."

"It is strange, Sir," returned the Baroness, "that any one can be so bold as to request your Royal Highness to take upon yourself the office of conductor to the forgotten and unknown, to every London ball or Hackney breakfast!"

"Egad! if you were to know all you would laugh to see the strange petitions I now and then receive on these subjects; but whatever I may think of the persons, I never betray them."

One of the royal household now came to announce to the Duke, that her Majesty was preparing to descend to supper, and the Prince, bidding the Baroness good night,

hastened to join his august relatives, saying before he went—"Herbert Milton is looking very ill; a relapse of his Lisbon fever, I fear. He has obtained six weeks' leave of absence—tell him to take care of himself. I think he is in love into the bargain!"

The Baroness was now joined by three or four gentlemen, together with Colonel Milton, and they followed the Royal party down stairs, into the apartments prepared for supper. As they were moving through the rooms, one gentleman observed,

"So Lord Pastern's match with Miss Woodbine is off; or rather she is off from her match!"

"By mutual consent?" demanded a second.

"No, faith!" replied the first; "she bolted, and he is fairly distanced. Beaufoy has carried her off, and by this time they are securely married; and although the old Peer is pretty fast across country, yet they had twenty-four hours' start, and cannot be overtaken."

"Then I conclude there will be a duel be-

tween James Woodbine and Beaufoy; a great deal of bad English spluttered by the papa; pistols fired in the air by this modern Paris; a few tears shed by the daughter; and Pastern will become more dirty than ever: and then the happy couple will be re-married at St. George's, and they will live on love all the rest of their lives."

"Has Beaufoy no fortune?"

"Very well, for a single man, but not enough to buy her enamels and French shoes. I take it, he has not above 2000*l.* a-year."

"They must starve!" exclaimed the other; "a sort of workhouse case."

"*Apropos!*" exclaimed another gentleman, "it appears to be the order of the day to be married like the Primitive Christians;—there is Seabridge started after Miss Manby, who is gone, they say, to Scotland, to wait for him. Deuce take it! it must be sheer love of the romantic that could induce him to make such a goose of himself, when he might have been quietly married at St. George's Church, without trouble."

"Ay!—by-the-bye," returned one of the others, "Sidney is to have one of the Dropmores, that is settled; and this, they tell me, is the reason why Miss Manby, who was in love with Harry's fortune, has resolved to console herself with Seabridge."

"By Jove! I should like to know who would not follow her example, if they could revenge themselves on one faithless lover by picking up such a substitute."

"But you are in the secret, I dare say, Milton? you can tell us all about it. I saw you at Mrs. Belleroche's closeted for a couple of hours. I suppose you were endeavouring to apologize for your friend, and perhaps offering yourself in his place. By George! you look as queer as though you yourself were the *délaissé*. Faith! who knows?"

Herbert, whose annoyance during this dialogue was excessive, and who from being surrounded by the crowd who were moving down the staircase, could not escape from his tormentors, merely replied, "You are quite right; I was endeavouring to say that for

myself, which I never heard you say of any one—a good word."

This observation was merely received with a laugh; and at this moment they entered the rooms, and were quickly seated at the tables. Nothing could be more splendid or more beautifully managed than the arrangements for this part of the *fête*. In the golden banqueting-room, a few of the ministers, foreign ambassadors, and first nobles of the land, were invited to the table set apart for the Royal Family, where the *coup d'œil* was at once brilliant and imposing. The spectacle here was not alone remarkable for the costly richness of the services of gold, silver, and porcelain, the massive splendour of the plate which decorated the buffets, the brilliancy of the crystal, the exquisite delicacy ef the viands, and flavour of the wines, but from that perfect *ensemble*, that attention to comfort, as well as magnificence, which bespoke the consummate good taste of the royal host.

One small side-table, or buffet, appropri-

ated to the immediate service of Her Majesty, particularly attracted attention, from the beauty of a service of chased gold and old Sevre porcelain, placed there and destined solely for Her Majesty's use: this was of the most classic and beautiful shape, and was principally from the chisel of Cellini or his pupils. The remaining apartments were intended for the guests, and were scarcely less brilliant or splendid: the effect of the whole being heightened by the illumination of the conservatory, where the royal band was stationed during the repast.

It was not only the splendour and magnificence of the ornamental portion of the *fête*, or the excellence of the perishable portion of the entertainment, which excited the surprise of a stranger, but that remarkable precision, civility, and attention, the quiet and order with which every thing was conducted. The hand of a magician seemed to clear and replenish the board, the various wants of the guests appeared to be anticipated and attended to

without noise, confusion, or apparent trouble, and one might have imagined, by the extreme quiet and regularity, that twenty, instead of three hundred persons were to be waited upon; nor did this proceed from the crowd of domestics, but from the perfection of the system, and the knowledge that each attendant possessed of his service.

At any other period, Herbert would have been delighted with the scene, but his heart was now in no state for enjoyment. It was in vain that his friend the Baroness attempted to rally him, or that he himself swallowed two or three tumblers of champagne to exhilarate his spirits, he awaited in agony the moment when the rising of the Royal Family gave the signal for the rest of the party to follow their example. He had eaten nothing, and the quantity of wine, which he had tost down, almost unconsciously, made him feel faint and dizzy, so that it was with the utmost pleasure he heard his father announce his intention of ordering the carriage. On their way, the

Baronet spoke with more kindness to his son; and upon their arrival at Herbert's lodgings, he shook him by the hand, and significantly told him, that he should expect to see him immediately on his return to London, from which he should probably be absent about ten days. When retired to his own apartment, Herbert's heart smote him at the idea of the step which he was about to take; but the spell was on him, and having directed his servant to prepare his clothes and order horses, he wrote a few lines to his mother, saying he was about to leave town for a week, and then throwing himself on the sofa, he endeavoured to forget in sleep the various conflicting sentiments which assailed him.

Sir Herbert Milton, accompanied by his nephew and solicitor, left town early on the following day, and proceeded with all possible speed towards ———, from whence intelligence had reached Alfred, by express, that an opposition candidate had suddenly made his appearance, and that he was actively em-

ployed in canvassing the very *independent* freeholders of what had been, and is considered to this hour, as close a borough as any in Great Britain. This opponent, who was no other than the radical Mr. Wrangle, whom Alfred met at Hazledown Hall, was supported by one or two attorneys, a rich brewer, a corn and coal factor, together with three or four *gentlemen* of influence and property in the town, whose pockets were certain of reaping the benefit of the contest, which they well knew must terminate unsuccessfully for their tool.

"Hang the fellow!" exclaimed Alfred, as they were discussing the mode of proceeding necessary to be pursued on their arrival, "he has done this merely to give annoyance, and create expense; or perhaps with the hope of seeing his abominable Spitalfields trash printed at full length in the papers."

"He will find that a very expensive method of publication," observed Mr. Thorp; "but the fact is, he is a mere machine in the hands

of a few designing men; they know he has money, and not less vanity, and you may rely upon it, he will pay dearly for the opportunity afforded him of launching forth his absurdities."

"I understood from you," observed Sir Herbert, addressing his nephew, "that you had already secured the borough, and that the election would be attended with a very trifling expense."

"Your return, Sir," rejoined the other, "is certain; it was as impossible to have foreseen this man's absurd attempt to oppose you, as it was improbable that his supporters would ve ventured to combat the preponderating interest and influence which I have secured."

"The expenses," added Mr. Thorp, "will be insignificant, comparatively speaking."

"What do you call insignificant, Sir?" demanded the Baronet.

"Why, Sir, I calculate that he will be beat out of the field in three or four days. Let us see—there may be two hundred voters—say

six pounds per man—it will not cost you more than fifteen hundred pounds at the utmost, a mere trifle—"

"A mere trifle!" rejoined Sir Herbert; "six pounds a man! I never heard of any thing so abominable, so profligate!—I should feel myself degraded were I to owe my return to any other means than the disinterested choice of the electors—as that of my nephew was obtained by his own merit and upright principles!"

Alfred bowed with an air of pretended modesty at this compliment, whilst the worthy solicitor first stared at the one, and then at the other, with a great inclination to give way to laughter; but restraining his smiles, he answered, "I fear that you have formed rather too exalted an idea of English electors generally: I have seen much of elections, but I am not aware of one that ever yet took place, where interest, threats, promises, corruption in some shape, money or its equivalent, was not more or less employed to influence the voters."

"Good God! Sir," exclaimed Sir Herbert, "what you say is a libel against the dignity and honour of the senate."

"We men of the law, Sir," replied the other, "see a little more of the *dessous des cartes* than you are aware of; and I again affirm, that in nine cases out of ten, the longest purse has the greatest chance of success. Principles or merit are but feeble opponents to an unlimited credit on a banker; and as for independence, it is like the phœnix, *che vi sia ciascun lo dice, ma dove sia nessun lo sa.*"

"This may now and then be the case," retorted Sir Herbert; "but you cannot hold it as a general principle."

"The immense expenses attending elections in general, prove that the exceptions are rare," replied Mr. Thorp: "and although I, whose trade it is to profit by the weakness of others, ought not to complain; yet I cannot avoid condemning, not only the system, but the vanity of men, who, without talents for discussion, without political, commercial, or agricultural knowledge; without education

often, and still more often without common sense; have the folly to squander enormous sums of ready money, to cut down timber, and encumber themselves and estates with debts and mortgages, for the sole permission of going to sleep under the gallery, or of having their names inserted in the list of a minority, until they are purchased into the majority by the same means by which they obtained their seat."

"Come, come, Mr. Thorp," rejoined Alfred, "pray have a little mercy on the representatives of the nation; one would think you were going down to support our radical adversary, and not a staunch friend of government."

"I may be subject to a bill of exceptions, Sir," replied the solicitor; "but the mode of conducting elections, the method of obtaining seats in the House, is of such a nature, as fully to warrant my assertions."

"In fact," said Alfred, "without entering into details, it is very clear, you consider the

whole system fraught with corruption, and the very reverse of independent."

"There is only one advantage," answered the other, "which I can perceive in the abuses which are practised: enormous sums are expended, and are by degrees circulated through the various veins and arteries of the community, until, at last, they find their way into the pockets of the labourer and artisan."

The party had now arrived within the boundaries of the borough town, where they were received by a large body of respectable freeholders and inhabitants, to whom Alfred presented his uncle, and they were forthwith conducted to the hustings, with the usual accompaniments of shouts, flags, ribbons, and music, and with roars of "Church and King!" —"Milton for ever!—and no Popery!" Here they were met by the Baronet's adversary, who had arrived from a different inn, amidst the yells and hurrahs of a mob of ragga-muffins, and the no less vociferous screams of "Independence Wrangle, and Reform;"

—"Equal rights!"—"Liberty for ever!"—"Beer for asking, and bread for nothing!"—A show of hands being demanded, and the proper officer having declared Mr. Wrangle's right to proceed to a poll, both parties set forth their respective claims to popular favour; each in his turn being hissed, applauded, hooted, or encouraged, as it seemed best to the goodly wisdom and independent spirit of the multitude. We will not follow the adversaries or their supporters through their different speeches; suffice it to say, that the Baronet declared himself in a firm, dignified, and gentlemanly manner, his sentiments savouring strongly of unbending and rigid attachment to high Tory principles.

Mr. Wrangle's address consisted of a long string of radical declamation, abounding with personalities against the Nabob and his crutch, as he termed Sir Herbert and Alfred, here and there interlarded with abuse of ministers, disrespectful allusions to the Royal Family, and compliments to Major Cartwright and Cobbett; and concluding by declaring,

that there was but one honest and independent man in the empire worthy of the honour of representing them, and that person was himself!

The state of the poll on the second evening promised an immediate termination; yet the operation of dining, drinking, shaking hands with one, soliciting some, promising others, and being abused and ridiculed in the coarsest terms, added to the brutal scenes of drunkenness and riot, opened Sir Herbert's eyes, in some measure, to the truth of Mr. Thorp's assertions, and gave him some idea of the expenditure and confusion attendant upon a contested election.

The result of the third day's poll was, however, such as to induce Mr. Wrangle to relinquish farther efforts, and Sir Herbert Milton was therefore declared duly elected. We must, however, leave him to complete the operations of his election, and to undergo all the pleasures of the subsequent chairing, cheering, and feasting, whilst we return to Miss Manby.

CHAPTER VI.

It was not until Miss Manby was seated in the carriage to proceed on her journey, that she felt, in all its force, the utter desolateness and misery of her situation. During the last twenty-four hours, her spirits had been excited by the effort she had determined to make, and her courage had been sustained by the proud consciousness of having sacrificed her own hopes and prospects to the welfare of her lover; but now that the sacrifice was completed, and her natural feelings had returned, her heart sickened within her, and she felt incapable of resisting the gloomy tendency of those sad recollections of her early history, which involuntarily crowded upon her mind.

Emily had offered no objection to Mrs. Walden's proposition of making a tour to the Northern Lakes, and had permitted her companion to make the necessary arrangements,

being herself utterly indifferent as to the point to which they directed their steps, all places being now alike bereft of interest or pleasure to her. Mrs. Walden thought that by continued change of situation, and variety of scenery, and by avoiding every allusion to the subject, the acuteness of her feelings might be diminished, and that she might in due time be inclined not only to renew her visit to Lady Lymington, but even to listen to the addresses of Lord Seabridge, Mrs. Walden having been spoken to privately on the subject more than once by Lady L. since their return to London.

It was not until late on the second night of their departure from town, that they arrived at Kendal, whence they proceeded on the following morning, leaving directions at the post-office for their letters to be forwarded to Keswick, at which romantic and beautiful spot they determined to take up their abode for some days, until Emily had sufficiently recovered her fatigues to enable them to pursue their tour.

The third day of their sojourn on the banks of the lovely Derwentwater had already nearly passed, and Mrs. Walden had been unable to persuade her young friend to quit the house to examine the interesting beauties of the neighbourhood. The evening being, however, peculiarly serene and temperate, a vehicle and guide were ordered, and they determined to proceed through the picturesque drives which abound in the vicinity of the Derwentwater to the summit of the Castle Rig, whence they might examine the splendid scenery of the lake and valleys. The deep and solemn seclusion of this interesting spot, the majestic grandeur of the mountains, the fearful and dizzy profundity of the chasms and precipices which yawned beneath, the awful sublimity of the rocks above, and the wild, mysterious appearance of the heaps of Druidical remnants scattered around, were in perfect accordance with the sombre feelings of Miss Manby's mind. Wrapped in admiration of this grand prospect, so unlike any thing she had seen before,

they remained seated on one of the recumbent masses of stone, unconscious of the length of time that had elapsed. It was not until the clouds of twilight were fast gathering round the summits of the mountains, and the lengthened image of the Giant Skiddaw had flung its dark shadows across the bosom of the lake, concealing from view the islands and hamlets beneath, that either Mrs. Walden or Emily thought of returning to the village. Mrs. Walden now, however, hastened to call the servant, who had remained with the carriage at a short distance down the hill, whilst Emily continued gazing on the darkening masses, and listening to the distant roaring of Lowdore, as it bounded from the mountain into the gulf beneath. Miss Manby's mind was so much absorbed with her own reflections, she had not noticed the footsteps of a person who, suddenly emerging from the midst of the trees, had placed himself within a few feet of her. He remained stationary for some seconds, then advanced still closer, and at length the crackling of the

dried leaves, as he trod upon some withered foliage, for the first time attracted Emily's attention. Concluding it could be no other than Mrs. Walden, she rose from her seat, and, on perceiving a man, whose countenance was in a measure concealed by the dark shade of an impending rock, she started back, trembled, and fell fainting on the fragment of granite on which she had been previously seated.

On Mrs. Walden's return with the servant to Emily, her surprise and alarm may be imagined, when she discovered her young friend in a state of insensibility, supported in the arms of a gentleman; nor was her astonishment diminished, when, upon approaching, she ascertained that this person was no other than Lord Seabridge. With an exclamation of surprise, she hastened to afford the necessary assistance to Miss Manby.

Upon her recovery, and as soon as she was seated in the low vehicle, by the side of which Lord Seabridge walked down the hill, his Lordship observed, "Before I venture to ask

what can have induced you to quit London at this gay season, I must apologize for my own imprudence, in having thus unintentionally alarmed you."

"I confess," replied Emily, "your sudden appearance did indeed terrify me beyond measure; my health, which is the cause of my quitting town, is not good, nor were my spirits in a very fit state to add to my courage."

"I shall never forgive myself," rejoined the young nobleman, "for my folly, in thus alarming you; but my eagerness to see you, on learning to my great astonishment that you were at Keswick, overcame my prudence."

"But to what are we indebted for the pleasure of meeting your Lordship here?" demanded Mrs. Walden.

"As I passed through this place," answered Lord Seabridge, on my return from the borough for which I am to be immediately returned, "I accidentally saw Miss Manby's carriage in the inn-yard; anxious to take your commands, and indeed curious, I confess, to

ascertain the cause of your visiting the Lakes during this unusual season, I went to your lodgings, and ascertained you had proceeded to the Castle Rig, whither I immediately followed you."

Having renewed his expression of regret at the alarm he had occasioned to Miss Manby, Lord Seabridge proposed accompanying them to their residence, where he passed the remainder of the evening.

No sooner had Herbert ascertained his father's departure, than he immediately threw himself into his cousin's britscha, and travelled day and night until he reached Keswick. Having quickly ascertained Miss Manby's abode, he hastened thither with the intention of urging her, by every prayer and persuasion, to consent to their immediate union, and with a firm resolution of quitting England forthwith, if she persisted in her previous determination of refusing him. On reaching the house, his surprise and agitation were extreme, on perceiving Lord Seabridge seated

at the table near Emily: the lights in the apartments rendering visible every thing that was passing within, whilst the darkness without entirely concealed him from observation. For a moment he stood transfixed and motionless. His Lordship's face was turned towards the window, and appeared clothed in smiles; that of Miss Manby was averted, but he judged that the gaiety of the one was but the reflection of the pleasure which beamed from the eyes of the other. Rage and jealousy now wrought up his mind to a pitch almost of frenzy; he rushed from the house, and exclaimed, "Was it for this that I have been ready to sacrifice my birth-right, to make myself an outcast from my father's roof for ever? Was it for this that I was willing to resign the affection of my parents, my hopes, my prospects in life? for this!—for a worthless, hypocritical girl!" A loud hysteric laugh burst from him; he saw the party within turn their heads and start; and he hurried in a state of wildness and distraction towards the

inn, with the intention of immediately following his father to Milton, and voluntarily offering him the required promise.

It was in this state of mind that Lord Seabridge soon after encountered Herbert; and the latter instantly demanded satisfaction of his Lordship, for what he conceived to have been a preconcerted plan, for supplanting him in the affections of Miss Manby.

The surprise of Lord Seabridge at this unexpected occurrence, fully equalled that of Herbert; but he immediately proceeded to remove Colonel Milton's apprehensions respecting Miss Manby, by declaring that his meeting with her had been purely the effect of accident. This explanation having had the desired effect of relieving the mind of Colonel Milton, a cordial reconciliation took place; and accompanying Lord Seabridge to the inn, he accepted his proffered friendship, and confided to him his intentions.

CHAPTER VII.

ANXIOUS to spare Miss Manby's feelings the shock of his sudden appearance, Colonel Milton determined, early on the subsequent morning, to announce his arrival by letter: his note contained but a few lines, explaining the object of his journey, and affording Emily some time to prepare for his reception, on which she determined, though contrary to the advice of Mrs. Walden. Though in some measure prepared to receive Colonel Milton, and supported by the presence of Mrs. Walden, Emily's firmness forsook her on his entering the room, and she sunk upon her chair, unable to speak, and almost unconscious of his having seized her hand, and warmly pressed it to his heart. After a pause of some moments, Colonel Milton addressed her thus:—

"It is needless for me to declare to you, Miss Manby, what is the object of my persisting to

follow you to this place, in despite of your positive injunctions to the contrary. After all that has passed between us, it would be a mockery to your feelings were I to renew my professions. After our last conversation at Mrs. Belleroche's, and the determination conveyed to you in my note from St. James's, it would be superfluous to say more than that I am here to ratify my own solemn declarations, and to implore you, as you value my future peace of mind, to retract the resolutions contained in your last letter."

"Your father! your father!" was all that Miss Manby could utter in reply.

"Yes," rejoined Colonel Milton, "I will not conceal from you that my father wishes to exact from me a promise that I would never see you again—that promise I will never yield until you are the wife of another—and that, again, I solemnly swear I never can live to see!" Thus Herbert continued, with all the warmth of the most devoted attachment, to urge his claim, successfully combating every

argument which the amiable girl advanced, in the hope of persuading him to abandon all idea of a measure by which he must inevitably incur his father's displeasure, and thus bring upon both the most painful consequences: in reply to which, Herbert assured her of his conviction, that his father's opposition would not extend beyond the period of their union.

At length, overcome by the urgency of his entreaties, Miss Manby, with a trembling voice, exclaimed, "You have conquered! and may Heaven, in its mercy, forbear to punish me for thus yielding to the dictates of my heart!"

Herbert, in an ecstacy of impassioned joy, pressed her to his heart, explained his future plans, communicated the line of conduct he intended pursuing with his father, and earnestly implored her to fix the earliest day for their union. He declared his wish that their marriage should remain a secret from all but his cousin and the Baroness, until he had returned to implore his father's forgiveness;

and whether assent or refusal should be the consequence of this step, he would then publish their marriage to the world, and present her at once as his wife. Miss Manby replied with modest firmness, that having placed the destinies of her life in his hands, she was ready to acquiesce in any plan which he thought most advantageous to them both. She only entreated him to adopt that which was the least likely to give additional umbrage to his parents, whose forgiveness would be alone wanting to render her happiness complete. The vicinity of the Scottish border was extremely tempting, and offered the speediest means of concluding their marriage without delay or difficulty; but Herbert was desirous to divest their union (as it must necessarily be considered clandestine) of every circumstance which could wound Miss Manby's delicacy, or aggravate the pain she felt at their marriage not taking place in an open and undisguised manner. The short period of Sir Herbert Milton's absence from London would preclude the possibility of their await-

ing the legal period for the publication of banns; and it was therefore determined that an express should be immediately forwarded to London, with the proper certificate, to obtain a license. Before he quitted Miss Manby, he communicated frankly to her all that had passed between himself and Lord Seabridge, on the preceding evening.

Anxious to despatch his servant to London, Herbert now hastened to join Lord Seabridge, who generously disregarding his own feelings, cordially congratulated Herbert on the result of his interview, at the same time offering to render him every possible assistance, and, as a farther proof of his regard, expressed his wish to resign one of the seats of his father's borough in favour of Colonel Milton. To this kind and unexpected offer, Herbert could only be induced to consent, on the positive assurance that his Lordship would immediately become his colleague, both seats being at the disposal of his father, and he accordingly prevailed on Herbert to accompany him on the following day to the borough of ———.

CHAPTER VIII.

HAVING promised to meet Herbert on the road by which the two friends were to return to Keswick, Miss Manby, accompanied by Mrs. Walden, unattended, in the evening proceeded some distance on the high road. For some time they had been contemplating the beauty of the surrounding scene, from an eminence which they had reached by a sequestered path, when their attention was attracted by the sound of footsteps, which appeared to be those of a person who had followed in the same direction. The thickness of foliage and the winding of the track concealed the individual from sight, until suddenly turning the angle of a dense mass of underwood, a tall and savage-looking gipsy woman appeared before them, while at a considerable distance, in the road beneath, they perceived a man guarding a donkey, which was loaded with

the usual camp equipage of these rude and wandering people. Although the appearance of this woman, who had evidently watched and followed them to this spot, naturally excited considerable alarm, yet from their vicinity to the public road, which wound round the base of the precipitous declivity on which they stood, at the distance of two or three hundred yards, they became re-assured. Miss Manby's alarm was however increased upon the nearer approach of the woman, on perceiving that she was the same beldam who early in the morning had called at their house, and, although alms had been given her, had shewn great discontent and insolence, and had muttered a long string of rhapsodies in a pretended gibberish, apostrophising Miss Manby by her Christian name, and uttering threats and expressions which plainly shewed that she was not only acquainted with her person, but with a portion of her history.

This circumstance had at the moment distressed Miss Manby, but Mrs. Walden re-

minded her of the art with which these extraordinary people often succeed in extracting family secrets from servants, in order that they may more efficiently practise on the credulity and charity of their employers, and obtain the credit of a science, the absurdity of which is obvious. In defiance, however, of the menaces of the servants, the hag had refused to quit the door of the house, calling upon "Emily" to give her money, and threatening her in coarse terms with vengeance if she refused that charity to others on which she herself subsisted; nor could she be forced away, until one of the domestics exclaimed, "Here comes my Lord and the Colonel!" when she turned round, cast a look of surprise and rage at the two gentlemen, and then drawing her cloak tight round her shoulders, and shaking her raven locks like an angry lion, so as almost to conceal her features, she stalked, muttering, away. The whole appearance of this woman was well calculated to inspire terror in the mind of a person even of

stronger nerves than Miss Manby, and it may be naturally concluded that the re-appearance of the hag at this moment terrified her to the utmost degree. Her tall and muscular figure, her bare and brawny arms, her terrific and masculine expressions, her wild and ferocious gaze, and vigorous step, gave her more the appearance of a powerful highwayman than a being of the other sex, the mother of the sun-burnt urchin which was slung like a rifle at her back. Her dress was suited not only to that of her tribe, but was in character with her stature and features. A short red cloak, soiled, and patched with a dozen different colours, was fastened round her neck by a large metal button; her legs and huge callous feet were bare. Her lower garment consisted of a coarse stuff petticoat, the edges of which were shredded and tattered, and exposed a knee which might have befitted a camel. The upper portion of her person was protected from the weather by the remnants of a man's drab coat, reaching some

inches below her waist, and held together with two or three wooden skewers; her head was sheltered by a large broad-brimmed black hat, which flapped down over her ears, from beneath which long masses of ebon hair straggled down her back, or hung pendant, over her cheeks and neck. Her dark and fine eyes glimmered like two spots of jet, from beneath her shaggy eyebrows, contrasting singularly with her sallow and haggard countenance, which appeared more sunken and emaciated from depravity and fierce passion, than from age.

"For God's sake!" whispered Miss Manby, "give her all the money we have, and let us endeavour to regain the road. She will not dare molest us there." Whilst Mrs. Walden emptied the contents of her purse into her hand, Emily looked down the declivity before them, which, to her great annoyance, she found was too steep to descend without imminent peril. Turning round, therefore, and clinging to Mrs. Walden, she again said,

"Give her the money, and let us return by the path."

"Here, good woman," exclaimed Mrs. Walden, half fainting with alarm, as she observed the deadly and malicious gaze which the beldam cast at Emily; "Here, take this, it is all we have, and, for God's sake! allow us to pass!"

"Shall I tell your fortune, wench?" said the woman, greedily seizing the proffered money from Mrs. Walden's hand, and speaking with a strong foreign accent, rather than the vulgarity of a woman of the lower class, yet shewing that she was perfect mistress of the language suited to her tribe and calling; "Shall I tell you whether you'll die a wife or a widow? whether 'tis a bridal coif or a winding-sheet, which flaps from yon dark cloud?"

The eyes of Emily mechanically turned towards the sky; she continued:

"Shall I tell you whether 'tis a marriage chime, or a funeral knell, which comes pealing on the western breeze?"

"Let us pass, good woman," exclaimed Mrs. Walden, in great agitation; whilst Emily clung closer to her arm, almost sinking with terror.

"You surely dare not interrupt or detain us?"

"Dare not!" replied the hag; "the woods are as free to me as they are to you. Here *you* dare not drive me from you like a beast of the field!"

"My good woman," rejoined Mrs. Walden, "we gave you money in the morning, and you repaid our charity with insolence and abuse."

"Charity!" retorted the female demon, with an air of contempt; "a miserable shilling! and do you call that charity?—you, who are an unknown, a born beggar, who wallow in the gold of others, who live by alms!"

"This is too much," said Mrs. Walden. "Insolent woman! permit us to pass, or I will call for assistance: is it your intention to murder or rob us?"

"Both, mayhap," returned the gipsy, with the utmost coolness. "But scream, scream if you dare! Utter but a word, and I will squeeze the breath from your throat!" Then seizing the arm of the trembling Emily with one hand, she thrust the other into the rent in the bosom of her coat, and partly exhibited the haft and blade of a long case-knife.

Miss Manby's terror was now increased to the utmost, and she vainly endeavoured to extricate her arm from the grasp of the fury.

"Charity!" again grinned forth the hag; "where would you have been, my bonnie lass, had you met with such charity, when the flames crackled under your feet; when the salt waves foamed above your head; and when the shark's tooth was whetted to feast on your dainty flesh? But I 'm not ungrateful, girl; you 've crossed my hand with the silver token, and I will tell you your fortune. I 'll tell you, mayhap, whose daughter you are!"

"If you know that," answered Emily eagerly, taking courage—"and it would seem almost that you possess that knowledge, by the manner in which you dare to insult me,—speak, and I will reward you beyond your expectations, though my parents prove to be of a cast as low as yourself. Nay, were you yourself my mother—"

"What is that?" said the woman, taking no immediate notice of Miss Manby's question, but insolently laying her hand on a beautiful chain which hung on Emily's neck. "Gold! come, cross my left hand with the king's picture, and I'll tell all! Feel, feel! I say," added the audacious wretch, "feel, girl, I know you have gold!"

"You said you knew my parents; disclose their names; and whether they be of high or low degree, rich or poor, dead or alive, I will give you gold to the full extent of your avarice."

"There is many the child that cannot tell his father," answered the gipsy, with a de-

praved leer; "but where is the base-born brat that does not know his mother?"

Twisting and forcibly opening Miss Manby's hand, she then resumed: "Here's a dainty morsel for a bridegroom to mumble his kisses on! but the grave shall sooner be its couch! the line of life is as short as a bridal-night; it is forked, too, and there's blood on it!"

"She is an infamous impostor!" exclaimed Mrs. Walden; "listen to her no longer; she knows nothing of your parents—regard not her vile ribaldry. Let us fly!"

Again Miss Manby, although nearly petrified with terror, attempted to escape; but the hag merely drew the knife a short way out of its case, and then coolly seizing the chain, tore it from Emily's neck and thrust it into her pocket, adding, "Softly, softly, my sweet one! Look here!—I'll tell you at the line of Venus; 'tis crossed by Saturn. Here's a black wedding, shall end in six feet of dark mould!—There's two cross bones in Gemini,

as plain as the watch by your side;" and with unparalleled effrontery, she tore it also from the agraffe by which it was suspended. "Look!" continued she to Emily; "look, wench," as the latter, half fainting with terror, had turned her head away; "here's a bridal-bed, decked with a funeral pall! Ay, marry, there's a storm brewing, shall bleach those glossy curls whiter than the gray crags on Skiddaw's brow!"

Frantic with agony, Mrs. Walden made an attempt to rush by, loudly screaming for help; but the urchin who had slipped to the ground, trained to mischief, threw himself in her path, and clung to her legs, as immovably fixed, as if she had been in the grasp of a wild bear's cub, rendering her progress impossible. The woman, in the mean time, struck the roof of her mouth with her tongue, producing that kind of clacking noise by which the goatherds in the South of Europe call their flocks, and she was answered by her male companion in the same manner. Giving a blow to his don-

key, which ran forward on the road, the fellow dashed into the wood with the evident intention of joining his female partner.

"Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed Miss Manby, "they will murder us! If it is money you want, if it is gold you require, allow me to depart, and, on my sacred word, I will give you any sum you demand. Send for it,—nay, come yourself, and I solemnly swear you shall meet with no molestation. In pity—in mercy —spare our lives!"

"What! you think to catch us with such old tricks: no, no, Miss, I had a taste of your charity this morning; it is now my turn. Colonel Milton's bride must pay both in body and purse for her ransom."

"Have I ever done you wrong, good woman?—have I ever injured you? Spare me! spare—" exclaimed Emily, as she sunk at the beldam's feet; while Mrs. Walden, in her efforts to disengage herself from the urchin, had been thrown upon her knees. The woman paid no attention to Emily's appeal, but as

soon as she was joined by her companion, she spoke to him in a dialect which Miss Manby could not comprehend. The man then seized Mrs. Walden by the arms, tied her hands behind her, took off his own coarse handkerchief, and fastened it across her mouth, and throwing her shawl over her eyes, pushed, or rather threw, her to the ground.

"Now, girl," said the woman, drawing forth implements for writing from her pocket, "write, or sign me an order on your banker in London for two hundred pounds! Write, I say!—or I will draw my knife across your throat!"

In an agony of terror Emily hastily signed the paper, which the woman folded up. "In God's name! let me depart; release my companion," exclaimed Miss Manby.

"No, no, wench; I told you the line of life was short, and stained with blood. Revenge is now mine!—Tie her to the tree!"

Miss Manby uttered a succession of frantic shrieks ere the ruffianly couple had time to

gag her mouth. Her situation was horrible —the hag had cast her cloak over her victim's head; she could see nothing, but she heard these horrid words—'Injury for injury!'—'Blood for blood!'—'I'll strike at his heart through your body!'—'You shall go to his arms a bride worthy his acceptance!'—The monster then pinioned her arms, and dragged her towards the rocks; whilst one rudely laid his hand upon her neck, and tore from it the embroidered *fichu*. But, whatever might have been the infamous purpose of the wretches, its execution was prevented. The sound of voices was heard; the ruffians relaxed their hold; the cloak fell from Emily's eyes, and, to her inexpressible joy, though fainting with terror, she saw Lord Seabridge, Herbert, and a servant rushing towards them.

The male gipsy bounded down the declivity on one side, with the agility of a chamois; whilst the woman attempted to follow her companion, not, however, without striking Miss Manby a blow which brought blood into

her mouth. A shot was fired—a loud shriek was uttered—and Emily had still strength to see the monster stagger, and fall over the side of the declivity. Whilst Colonel Milton and his friend were occupied in affording assistance to the ladies, the servants and postilions were employed in examining the gipsy, who appeared so dreadfully bruised and mutilated by the fall, as to render it impossible to remove her without farther aid. The first thought of Emily and Mrs. Walden, upon recovering their senses, was to offer up thanks to Heaven for their timely preservation, for which they were indebted to the most trifling, yet providential circumstance. The donkey having proceeded a few yards upon the road, finding itself at liberty, had lain down, and attempted to roll on the sand, but the heavy burthen on its back had prevented it from again rising; and, after several unsuccessful efforts, it had patiently resigned itself to its fate, and lay extended at full length across the road. The gipsies had been too intent on

their proceedings, and the ladies too much occupied with their own dreadful situation, to hear the distant rattling of Lord Seabridge's carriage, the progress of which was arrested on its arrival near the animal. Whilst the postilions were removing the creature on one side, the screams of a woman's voice struck the ears of the party. Judging immediately by the sounds, as well as the equipage of the fallen animal, that the beast must belong to some marauders who were perpetrating an act of robbery or murder near the spot, the gentlemen sprung from the carriage, seized Lord Seabridge's travelling pistols, and darted into the wood in the direction whence the cries proceeded. They had not proceeded many yards ere the shrieks again caught their attention, and in a few seconds Miss Manby was supported in the arms of her lover.

The ladies having been conveyed in the carriage to their lodging, and Herbert being assured by the physician that the blow she had received was not serious, he proceeded

with a magistrate to examine the wretched prisoner, who had been conveyed into the town. Colonel Milton was not surprised, after the short details he had heard from Mrs. Walden and Emily, to learn that the miserable wretch was a man in disguise; but his astonishment exceeded all bounds, upon examining his features, to discover that he was no other than his discarded servant, Perez. The circumstance which had thus thrown this monster again across the path of Colonel Milton, and at last delivered him up to justice, was not less wonderful than that Herbert himself should again be destined to defeat the villain's horrid purpose.

Though slightly wounded by Lord Seabridge's pistol, yet he was so dreadfully bruised by his fall, that the surgeons gave it as their opinion, that he could not possibly live more than a few hours. This, however, was not the case, the strength of his constitution having borne him through; and he eventually suffered the reward of his crimes on the scaf-

fold. Being informed of his danger, Herbert urged him, ere he left this world, to declare not only his object for attempting to assassinate him at Lisbon, but by what extraordinary circumstance he appeared in the neighbourhood to commit a crime, which, were he to recover from his present mutilated state, must inevitably bring him to the gallows. Though aware of his danger, the fellow shewed no remorse, but rather rejoiced in the deed, cursing Herbert for arriving at the moment, as a few minutes more would have sufficed for him to have completed his diabolical purpose. He declared that his desire to murder Herbert at Lisbon had arisen solely from vengeance for the ignominious treatment which had been inflicted upon him in the English camp; that he had no other accomplice before the fact than the two bravoes alluded to in that affair. He swore that Alfred Milton had bribed him to abstract the letters, and had furnished him with money on his return to England, as a compensation for his services and the loss of

his place and character; but that Alfred had not the slightest knowledge of his murderous intentions. He accounted for his presence in the vicinity of Keswick, by declaring that he had escaped from Lisbon with a party of smugglers—that he had gone to France, and entered as steward on board a French privateer, which was captured shortly afterwards by an English cruiser; he had for some months been confined at Norman Cross, from whence he escaped with two others, and as he spoke English fluently had easily passed himself off as a beggar, until he joined a party of Gipsies, who were proceeding to the North to carry on a smuggling business across the border. Accident had alone brought him to Keswick on his route to Bowness—he had seen Miss Manby, and having ascertained from the servants that she was going to be married to Colonel Milton, he had resolved, if possible, to murder her, in order to revenge himself on the latter. The sight of Herbert in the morning had obliged him to think of his own safety,

and both he and his companion were on their way to escape from the neighbourhood, when chance threw Miss Manby into his power. He intended to have hurried to London, to have received money for the draft, and then to have made his escape to Spain. Nothing more could be extracted from him, and although his death appeared inevitable, he continued to utter curses against Herbert to the last moment of his remaining in the room. To every question respecting Miss Manby's birth the wretch would give no answer, merely saying, "I have but one consolation in dying, which is the hope that you will be as miserable, and die a worse death than I,—if I could be assured of life, and if dying, of eternal salvation, I would not tell you what I know, for it would save you from misery and death more miserable than mine!"

The idea of Alfred's being in any way connected with the abstraction of his letters, had never struck Herbert before; nor did he now believe either that fact, or that Perez had re-

ceived money from his cousin subsequent to the fellow's being driven from his service. Having well considered the subject, and compared these declarations with his horrible language and infamous conduct, neither Lord Seabridge nor Herbert attached the slightest faith to any thing he had uttered, save that it was his intention, perhaps, to have committed the crime, which their timely arrival prevented. Nothing more was ever extracted from Perez, who died on the scaffold with the same effrontery and hardihood which had marked his previous conduct.

The expected licence having arrived, the union of the young couple was celebrated with simple solemnity in the parish church, on the day subsequent to this scene, in the presence of Mrs. Walden and Lord Seabridge. The latter, who was much affected at thus fully completing the generous sacrifice he had made of his own feelings, immediately took his departure for London, leaving Herbert and his bride in admiration of his disinterested and

noble conduct. We will not dwell upon the rapture with which Herbert pressed his lovely Emily to his heart, or the ecstasy of delight with which she now looked upon her husband, when once she felt that she was irrevocably united to him by a tie which nought but death could sever. We must pass over the three or four days of bliss which intervened between the celebration of the nuptial ceremony and the arrival of that moment which rendered it necessary for Herbert to tear himself for a few days from her arms. The post of the fourth morning brought two letters, one from Lord Wellington, offering Colonel Milton a staff situation near his own person; and the other from his mother, forwarded from London. Her Ladyship informed her son that the Baronet had broken a blood-vessel, and although in no danger, that he was confined to his bed. She added, that Sir Herbert had expressed a wish to see his son immediately, and had desired her to write and request him to proceed forthwith to Milton Park. Lady

Milton begged her son would not lose a moment in hastening into the country, as his father expressed great anxiety upon the subject, adding that Alfred had left the Park in order to transact some business for his uncle, previous to the election at the India House. It may be well imagined that although a separation at such a moment was most distressing and painful, yet Herbert did not hesitate to obey forthwith.

Travelling night and day without interval, Herbert arrived late in the afternoon of the third, at Milton Park, and in a few seconds was locked in the fond embrace of his mother, who immediately conducted him to the chamber of the Baronet, whom he found better, though still confined to his bed from the debility occasioned by loss of blood. Sir Herbert appeared pleased at the sight of his son, and after half an hour's conversation on indifferent subjects, he requested Lady Milton and his attendants would retire into the next room, as he was desirous of having a little private

conversation. Herbert's heart beat with anxiety, doubt, and curiosity; by the kindness of his father's manner, he began to flatter himself that he was about to retract his objections, and he now waited with the utmost impatience for the commencement of the subject.

"I was in hopes to have seen you sooner," observed the Baronet; "I have matters of much importance to communicate, and both to spare yourself and me pain, I must request you to read the papers contained in that box (pointing to an office case which stood on a table near the bed); you will read them, and I trust their contents will not only be sacred, but that you will on no account ever recur to the subject. I feel that I have been guilty of some injustice towards you; your cousin, from too great zeal for your welfare, may perhaps have entertained fears, and exaggerated circumstances, which will, I hope, soon be explained. The best proof I can give you of my regard is, by confiding to you a subject

known only to one other person besides myself, and I have no doubt you will prove yourself worthy of the trust I repose in you."

"May God grant that you may never have cause to repent your kindness!" replied Herbert, respectfully pressing the hand of the Baronet.

He then promised his father to read the papers, and was on the point of seizing this favourable opportunity of declaring his marriage, when the Baronet observed, "I hear from your cousin and mother that you have been absent from London. I should have been glad had you accompanied us to ——. The radical candidate put me to considerable trouble and expense, but we carried the day with a high hand."

"I, also," rejoined Herbert, "have been canvassing a borough, if a visit of a few hours may be so called; and, if you do not object, Sir, I am to be returned by Lord Seabridge for ——."

"An amiable young man, I hear, the young

Lord. They tell me he is going to be married."

"I think not, Sir," rejoined Herbert; "nothing appeared more unlikely, for the moment, at least, when he quitted me in the North—"

"In the North!" exclaimed Sir Herbert, with great seriousness, at the same time regarding his son fixedly; then recovering himself he added, "but I feel fatigued this evening—retire, read the papers, and come to me early in the morning."

Determining at once to seize this opportunity of putting an end to his suspense, Herbert took his father's hand, and said,

"I should be unworthy of your confidence, Sir, if I withheld from you a moment longer, that I have taken a step without your knowledge—"

"What step? what have you done?" exclaimed Sir Herbert, raising himself in his bed.

"Sir, I am married."

"Married!—to whom?"

"To Miss Manby."

"Horrible! horrible!" vociferated the Baronet, springing from his bed. "Unhappy wretch! she is your sister!"

Colonel Milton neither saw nor heard farther, his brain turned, and he fell senseless on the floor.

CHAPTER IX.

VARIOUS were the surmises and reports which prevailed throughout London at Miss Manby's sudden departure. The appearance of the house in Park-lane, quickly announced the event to all her acquaintance, and afforded an excellent subject for the gossips; some of whom said that she had eloped with Lord Seabridge, whilst one or two did not hesitate to insinuate that her reasons for disappearing at this moment were,—and they then winked significantly, shook their heads, and merely said, "*Tant va la cruche.*" This, however, was but a matter of a day or two's speculation, and like all other events and persons, she was forgotten, ere she had even arrived at Keswick. During the distress and agitation of her mind prior to her departure, she had entirely omitted to send an excuse to Sir Gore Hashwell, with whom she had been engaged to dine a day or

two previous to her departure. It was not until the arrival of the Baroness, who was one of the last of the party, and who had promised to *chaperon* Emily to Sir Gore's, that he was made acquainted with her having left town, and until dinner was announced this subject afforded excellent matter for criticism and surmises; Madame de Geigenklang having some difficulty to persuade the party that her young friend had really not eloped with Lord Seabridge, but that ill health was the sole cause of her quitting the metropolis.

The party, with some trifling additions, sisted of persons already introduced to the reader, and amongst these were Sir Harry Sneerwell, Sir James Epsom, Lady Catesby, and Mr. Hampden Botts. The appearance of this latter personage amidst such a distinguished company, was a matter of surprise to many who were not acquainted with the host or his parties. Lady Catesby, who in despite of Alfred's desertion, was now at the summit of fashion, and who had a particular object in

view in making up to this young man, had succeeded not only in introducing him to Sir Gore, but in persuading the Baronet to appoint Mr. Botts to the important and lucrative office of his solicitor. Her Ladyship's spirit of vengeance against Alfred Milton, though she contrived to conceal it, did not rankle with less violence in her heart. She knew that Mr. Botts was entrusted with the arrangement of Alfred's affairs, and she imagined that the secret to which the latter had alluded, and to which he declared he attached so much importance, must be known to the young lawyer. What this secret was, she was utterly unable to guess. That it was something of the deepest importance, was clear, and she made up her mind to wring it from Mr. Botts, unless his probity was proof against self-interest, vanity, and ambition. She flattered herself that the possession of this secret would place Mr. Milton in her power; or, at all events, effectually secure herself from his malice.

Amongst the many worthy Amphytrions who were gradually endeavouring to naturalize the beneficent culture of foreign gastronomy in London, none were more conspicuous than Sir Gore. He was a man of immense wealth and good appetite; no trifling advantage for a mortal, blest with an excellent cook, and the means of never allowing that cook to remain idle. As far as *entrées, entremets,* and *hors d'œuvres,* are concerned, Sir Gore was a man of exquisite judgment; and, Vatel himself might not have been ashamed to receive at his hands plans for the distribution of his services,—academically a *menue:* —*vulgo,* a bill of fare. Every thing that appeared on his table, was the perfection of the *chiar' oscuro* of the culinary art. M. de Forbin could not have evinced greater skill in the choice and arrangement of a picture gallery, or Mr. Baton greater taste in that of a *bouque* of artificial flowers, than the Baronet in the tints, tones, depth of colouring, finish, and aërial lightness of his dishness. They were

varied, and yet blended together, with such perfect harmony and keeping, as to render them singularly pleasing to the eye, and affecting to the palate. The darker *plats* had the effect of bringing water into the mouth instead of tears into the eyes; the brighter subjects filled up the vacant corners of the system, instead of leaving a void and longing in the brain; while a glowing, mellow warmth pervaded the whole, rivalling the lovely productions of Titian or Claude. The merit of the various solids was mightily enhanced by the virtues of the fluids, which, though few in number, were of rare excellence, both as to *corps* and *bouquet*. Bacchus himself (who, in despite of the boastings of the ancients, must have been but a poor judge of claret or hock, having never tasted any thing but *vin-du-pays*, all his lifetime), might have reaped considerable benefit to his cellar, by appointing Sir Gore his "*Commissaire Gourmet Priseur.*"

In addition to this, the plate, porcelain, furniture, and attendance, perfectly corre-

sponded with the comestibles. The only thing which appeared out of harmony at his table, was the composition of his company; which, from a want of tact on his part, or from a determination to please himself in the selection of his guests, generally consisted of the most incongruous and anti-sympathetic mixtures, and rendered his parties disagreeable to all but those whose only object in accepting his invitations, was to satisfy their more ignoble senses. For instance, the solemn and haughty Tory cabinet-minister found himself seated by the merry-laughing wife of some violent ultra-liberal opposition member. The stiff, pompous, and hundred-quartered restored *emigré* Marquis, was elbowed by some banished Revolutionist. The no less important and spiteful patroness of Almack's, was obliged to give her sceptre-bearing arm to some pitiful wight, who was not even eligible for the all-sweeping, mire-gathering, charity ball. The directress of the musical academy, whose whole soul was wrapt up in

Rossini—whose whole conversation ran on solfeggios, dispasons, chords, scores, bernols, and other musical galamatias—was probably placed between a deaf county member, whose only harmonic pretensions consisted in his ear-trumpet; and a peer whose aversion to every thing in the shape of singing was so great, that he not only made pies of nightingales, but carried on an eternal warfare against all the linnets, larks, thrushes, and blackbirds on his estates—preserving hawks and owls to assist in the destruction of these native warblers. Here a bigoted high-church dean, who had come up with an anti-papal address, was seated next to a fanatic deputy, who had arrived with a petition from the Catholic Rent; and there some French or German ambassador, as proud of his *colombier*, or his crumbling *Ritter Schloss*, as of his title and pedigree, was forced to give his arm to a Madame Caracoli, a Miss Dibbs, or some other exotic and indigenous vocalist, of which crying indignity, he would, of course,

immediately dress *protocole* and *procès verbal*, and instantly write to his court, stating that *mesalliances* in England were as common as fogs, and that cabinet-ministers and countesses always associated with opera-dancers and courtesans.

"The party composed as usual!" said Sir James Epsom to Sir Harry, "a sort of handicap. I really believe if he could ask Napoleon or Lucifer to dinner, he would write Louis *Dixhuit*, or the Archangel Gabriel, to meet him!"

"In a man of wit and talent," replied Sir Harry, "this might pass current for eccentricity and humour; the brilliant sallies of the host, assisted by such Champagne as this, might compensate for the discordancy of rank and opinion, and reconcile the party one with another."

"But there is nothing of that kind to be alleged as an excuse at present; he sits at the head of his table, like a sign over a French *traiteur*," observed Sir James.

"Yes," retorted his friend, "he merely wants a label to be hung round his neck, with the inscription, '*Ici l'on donne à boire et à manger*,' to adapt him perfectly for a sign."

"His fortune," continued Sir James, "save and except that which is dedicated to gastronomy and its accessories, does as little credit to his heart, as his occupation of a seat in the House does to his head."

"His rising," repeated Sir Harry, "always reminds the House of their dinner; and if he is not coughed down, he generally finds himself, in a few seconds, in undisputed possession of empty benches, and *tête-à-tête* with the Speaker."

"I do not know so much about his heart," observed Epsom, "but certainly his mind and talents receive no augmentation of praise from his expenditure. He has no taste for literature or the fine arts; as Lady Maria says, 'he is not the Mæcenas of any author;' no sculptor or painter is encouraged or rewarded by his patronage; he buys books

for the bindings, and pictures for the frames."

"He has a body," answered Sneerwell, "but not an atom more soul than is necessary for the common functions of existence."

"But I hear, at all events, that he is charitable and good-natured. Those *escalopes* are perfect!" observed Sir James; "allow that he has some good qualities?"

"I do not even think him good-tempered," replied Sir Harry; "I also read of his charity; but I never heard of it except through the full-length medium of the newspapers."

"Come, come, Sneerwell," rejoined Sir James, "you are too severe! He is very kind to his friends, and has succeeded, I believe, in pushing on in the world one or two deserving young men, by his fortune and interest. Do you like truffles dressed with Mousseux or Sillery?"

"They must have been cooks, then," retorted Sir Henry Sneerwell; "rely upon it,

no one ever owed his success in life to his liberality—I like truffles best *cuit-à-l'eau*.—No humble friend is indebted for his advance, to the exertion of his interest with Government or the King; and that which in the latter case, in a noble mind, might proceed from the disinclination to incur an obligation not in his power to repay, in him is only motived by selfishness, and the dread of exhausting a source on which he himself may have occasion to draw at some subsequent period for his own immediate benefit."

"Egad! a man who has sense enough to give such excellent dinners," replied Sir James, "must have a noble mind and enlightened understanding."

"A capacious stomach, if you please," retorted Sneerwell, "but he's the greatest bore on earth! With a fortune beyond his wants, he is never content; he is always going to purchase every thing, and buys nothing: and then he kills half the old women in London, by running from one to the other,

publishing his domestic grievances, and swearing he has only one hope in life left, which is to see his brothers and sisters happily married; and when it comes to the question of settlement, he backs out, and refuses his consent."

They were interrupted by Sidney observing across the table to Sir James—"So I hear your brother is coming home from Spain immediately!"

"I believe so; we expect him every day," was the reply.

"Egad! they tell me he is going to be married; *je vous en felicite.*"

"You had better reserve your congratulations for him," answered Sir James; and then turned his head, wishing to put an end to the conversation.

The other resumed, "Who is the lady?"

Sir James looked hard at him, and made a sign, which the first not observing, continued, "If what I hear be true, he has shewn more prudence than taste. They tell me she is very

rich, but immoderately ugly and disagreeable."

In vain the person on his left hand trod on his foot; he begged *her* pardon, and rattled on—"I should never have expected my friend Robert to have sold himself for money; for he surely cannot affect to care twopence for the lady!—who has not even the advantage of making up for the roughness and want of beauty of her exterior by the perfections of her mind. I am rather curious to see her!"

Sir James at length very coolly replied, "Pray, Sidney, let me introduce you to the lady herself; she is opposite to you, and her mother is at your elbow."

To judge of Captain Sidney's confusion and horror at this circumstance is impossible; in vain he endeavonred to make some apology, he floundered and refloundered, every word he uttered made the matter worse; in vain he swore he would never believe a word that was said by any one, and congratulated the mamma on the charms of her daughter, who

was really a very pretty-looking person; in vain he accused himself of being the most *gauche,* imprudent fool in the world. The mischief was not to be undone, and was moreover increased a thousand fold by his hearing after he had left London, that the young lady had declared her determination of changing her mind, and had formally rejected Captain Epsom; who merely arrived in town to receive his *congé,* and hate Sidney all the rest of his life for his indiscretion.

In the mean time Lady Catesby had been carrying on her schemes against Mr. Botts.

"I think you said you had not been able to procure a subscription for Almack's? Are you anxious to be on any body's list?"

Mr. Hampden Botts's eyes glistened with hope, and he eagerly replied, "It is the thing of all others I am most ambitious of, and would give any thing to obtain."

"Well," rejoined Lady Catesby, pretending to make it a matter of the utmost importance and difficulty, "I will see what can be done,

and perhaps I shall succeed: but you are aware of the immense obligation under which I shall be placed; but," continued she, "why have you never presented me to your mother and sisters?—they are such nice lady-like persons!—were they ever at the French play?"

Mr. Botts thought the gates of Paradise were opening to receive him, and he could have fallen down to worship his fair neighbour.

"I never ventured to propose to introduce them to your Ladyship," answered he, "but I need not say how flattered they would be at the idea of being on the list of your acquaintance. As to the French play, I know they are dying to go there, but they never could get a subscription."

"I will call upon them certainly in a day or two, and I should so much like to know them! They are, I hear, so clever, so accomplished, so well brought up. Odious, nasty, vulgar creatures!" muttered her Ladyship to herself, "I shall take care to have them re-

fused if they call on me; and next year I shall favour them with 'Evening' on my card."

"I really hardly know how to thank you for your kindness; but it is a proof," said Mr. Botts sentimentally, "that beauty of countenance is the sure indication of the perfection of the mind. Would that it were in my power to repay you!"

Lady Catesby pretended to smile, blush, and close her eyes at Mr. Botts's compliment, and then answered:

"Oh! I assure you I do not know how it is, but I feel a great interest in you all. Of you I think highly. So much has been said in your favour by Mr. Alfred Milton, that I have always been anxious to make not only your acquaintance, but that of your family: in the mean time, you may make your mind easy about Almack's and the French Play."

"No words can express my gratitude, and I again repeat how unhappy I feel that I have it not in my power to shew my sense of the obligation. Almack's and the French Play!"

muttered Mr. Botts to himself, with a grin of ecstacy.

"Apropos," said Lady Catesby, "I have thought of a circumstance in which you can be perhaps of great service, not only to me, but to my friend Lady Dossington, on whose list you will be."

"Mention it, pray; any thing I can do," answered Botts: again muttering to himself, "Almack's and the French Play! how I shall be envied in all the Inns of Court!"

"The fact is," returned Lady Catesby, "Colonel Milton has proposed (you must not mention it to a soul) to Lady Susan Bossville, but before my friend Lady Dossington gives her consent, she is very anxious to ascertain what is the real state of Colonel Milton's prospects. She entreated me to manage this, if possible, in a delicate way, to spare her the disagreeable necessity of questioning Sir Herbert as to his intentions respecting his son."

"I wish it were in my power to be of any service to you; but the fact is, we do not

transact his business: his solicitor is Thorp of Lincoln's Inn."

"Yes, I am aware of that," answered Lady Catesby, "but Mr. Milton told me (and here she boldly hazarded an untruth) that you had communicated a secret of the utmost importance, affecting the fortunes of his cousin in the most serious manner."

"I assure you he misinformed you," answered Mr. Botts: "if you will give me your word not to betray me, I will tell you frankly, that I obtained through Thorp's clerk, a sight of Sir Herbert's will for Mr. Alfred; but I never saw it myself, and am utterly ignorant of its contents; though I do remember his saying that he had discovered a most important circumstance, which might perhaps be the means of making his fortune;" and then whispering in Lady Catesby's ear, he added, "I have reason to believe that Colonel Milton is illegitimate."

Lady Catesby now felt convinced that she had struck upon the right scent, and imme-

diately replied, "Good God! it will be of the utmost importance to Lady Dossington to ascertain this fact; I guessed as much from something which fell from Alfred. Do you not think it possible for me to obtain a sight of the papers you allude to, by the same means employed by Mr. Milton. By obliging Lady Dossington, I shall then have a right to demand a subscription for the whole season, not only for yourself, but for your mother and sisters."

This lure was too strong to be resisted, and after a moment's thought Mr. Botts replied, "I will do all I can to persuade Mr. Crumpton, who is about to marry my eldest sister, to allow you to look at the documents, if they are not removed from the office; but I should not be surprised if Sir Herbert had taken them with him to the country."

"In that case, Mr. Crumpton can most likely give me an idea of the contents of the will; or, at all events, satisfy me as to the important point of Colonel Milton's legitimacy.

By-the-bye," added her Ladyship, "you may hint to your future brother-in-law, that I have strong interest with the —— Office; and that upon his according me this trifling favour, I will use my utmost exertion to get him appointed solicitor."

"You may rely upon me using all my endeavours," rejoined Mr. Botts, "to persuade him; and, as Mr. Thorp is absent, it will be a matter of greater facility; at all events, as your Ladyship says, if the papers are removed, he can satisfy you on the leading points."

"Well then, I shall expect to hear from you on the subject to-morrow or the next day; and in the mean time, I will tell Lady Dossington I am indebted for the knowledge of what she desires to ascertain entirely to your influence."

Overcome by Almack's and the French Play, which danced before his mind perpetually, more than by the lure of his future brother-in-law's obtaining a lucrative appointment, Mr. Botts promised faithfully to

use his utmost efforts to induce the solicitor's clerk to betray his trust; and Lady Catesby, transported with pleasure at the idea of having it in her power to revenge herself on Alfred, now turned the conversation, mutual secrecy being first agreed upon.

The Opera being touched upon among other subjects, a gentleman present observed, that it was probable a riot would take place during the evening, the managers having refused to engage Mademoiselle Gambelli.

"I hope not," exclaimed a young man in the Guards, "as I am on duty there!"

"You ought to be—that is to say," said Sir Harry,—"pray is this the way you young men take care of the public? It is an excellent proof of the great utility of employing the military on these occasions."

"I assure you, Sir Harry, the military would feel very much indebted to you," replied the other, "if you could contrive to have their services dispensed with at the theatres. We feel ourselves very much out of our ele-

ment, standing as side-scenes within, and exposed to the insolence of footmen and coachmen without,—supported in most cases by their masters. But I agree with you, it is a perfect farce, our being employed when we have it not in our power to act, and if a person force a sentry, why the man must submit; or if he use his arms, take his chance of going before a jury, who always make it a point of hanging a soldier."

If there should be a row to-night, I shall certainly entrench myself in your box. I have no idea of being beaten and maltreated for an hour or two, merely because I wear a red coat; which at once deprives me of the power of defending myself from insult."

"I would rather we should be hooted and pelted for a whole day," replied Captain Sidney, "than that we had the power of taking the law in our own hands; the miserable consequences which might arise from the unlimited authority which the military enjoy in other countries, is, thank Heaven! averted

by the wisdom of the laws of this: and although, as the song says, '*Je suis militaire, et c'est un bel état,*' yet I hope never to see the day when a rotten egg, thrown in the eye of a trooper, may entitle him to cut off the nose of a citizen."

"It is all very fine, Sidney, for a song to say, '*Oh, quel plaisir d'être soldat;*' but if the man who composed it should ever have the pleasure of encountering an English mob, he would alter his opinion."

"I think he would prefer exposing himself to any injury," rejoined Sidney, "rather than have upon his conscience the weight of remorse of havingwantonly sacrificed human life; when often the innocent suffer for the guilty."

"It is very hard, however," answered the other, "that I must submit to any ill-usage the mob may choose to inflict upon me, and not wield the weapon in my hand for my own defence, because I chance to be equipped in regimentals; whereas if I were *en bourgeois* I might repay them with interest."

"I do not think you understand much of the law," observed Sir Harry, "or you would remember that you are no less a citizen in one coloured dress than another, and that your right of defence is as legitimate,—as your offence would be unlawful."

"If I knock a man down, for instance, with my fist, who has insulted me," replied the officer—"that is unbecoming an officer and a gentleman, and I am cashiered; if I pink him through the body, or draw the claret from his head, then comes judge and jury. Why, your Bow-street officer has the advantage of us in every thing. Obstruct him in the execution of his duty, and he forthwith pommels away on their heads with his truncheon; if that has no effect, out comes his pistol and cutlass, and he may play away with them; whilst we poor devils must stand with heroic patience, and endure the most villanous usage, until a magistrate can make up his mind to read the Riot Act, amidst a shower of brick-

bats, against which a cast-iron parasol would be no protection."

"Well, then, I can tell you an admirable plan to accelerate your hour of vengeance," said Sir James; "first catch your magistrate, and then place yourself behind him: the first volley of dead cats will immediately induce him to read or run."

The young soldier had, however, taken the hint of the expected tumult, and hastened to re-equip himself for his duty. The rest of the party were not long in following him to the theatre, leaving their host with the most exalted opinion of his cook's brilliancy and his own dulness.

The prediction of a violent uproar at the Opera, was not without foundation. Every thing, however, had gone on with perfect harmony until the curtain drew up for the commencement of the ballet (a new and grand mythological spectacle), when roars of "Gambelli! Gambelli!" resounded from every cor-

ner of the house. In vain did a profusion of transparent gauze clouds expand and exhibit a gorgeous array of heathen divinities in a spangled Olympus; in vain did omnipotent Jove display his thunderbolts, Mars poise his javelin, Apollo touch his lyre, or Neptune shake his trident; to no purpose did Venus display her charms, Minerva her wisdom, Juno her pride, or Cupid flap his wings; it was without effect that a splendid Sun spread forth its tinsel beams, or a canvas Helicon flowed murmuring from a pasteboard Parnassus. In vain did the dancers and figurantes of both sexes (the petticoats of the latter being expressly made shorter than usual for the occasion), exert every sinew to avert the storm by the rapidity and gracefulness of their *pirouettes* and *battemens*. The hearts and eyes of the audience were callous to all but Gambelli. Yells, hisses, and groans pealed from the very bathos of the pit to the pathos of the gallery, intermingled with cries of "Off, off! Shame! Go on! Managers! and Gambelli!" The bal-

let-master came forward; bowed, scraped, and put his hand to his heart; the orchestra played louder and *più forte* than ever. But the voice of the one and the notes of the other were completely overpowered by the dreadful din. Dragonetti, Linley, Mori, trumpeters, flutes, and kettle-drums were obliged to yield to the diabolical music of the upper spheres or rather tiers.

Even the gods turned pale, and some of the least courageous were seen deserting the divine assembly, dreading the attacks of these modern Titans. No Gambelli or manager appeared. As the patience of the spectators became exhausted, so did their fury increase, and a sudden rush was made by an immense number of gentlemen, or at least well-dressed persons, from the pit into the orchestra, from whence the affrighted musicians were glad to escape without loss of limb, but leaving their *spolia opima* behind them at the mercy of the besiegers. Here the assailants wreaked their rage on flutes and hautboys, clarionets, and key-bugles; lute and harp were cut to shreds;

sacbut and dulcimer were shivered to atoms; Pelions of bases were piled on Ossas of violoncellos. Olympus trembled in proportion as the nerves of the scene-shifters were shaken, by the volleys of music-books, fiddle-cases, and stools which rattled against the sacred mount.

"What a disgraceful scene," said a foreign gentleman to Sir Harry Sneerwell. "I suppose they are all *canaille.* Have you no military; no *gens-d'armes?*"

"Oh dear, no! This place is destined entirely to cutting capers, and not throats: besides, these are most of them young men of family and fashion; 'twould be a great pity to hurt them, they are so useful in procuring us good dancers, and keeping the manager in order. Look, there is Lord Taunton, playing not on, but in the piano-forte; and Colonel Killcannon of the Guards, standing on his head on the big-drum. He'll jump into it presently—very distinguished officer!"

"What!" exclaimed the other with astonish-

ment; "that a Colonel in the Guards! *mais vous badinez?* I mistook him for the clown of the theatre?"

"No, he is merely professor of gymnastics to his regiment. He is the only man in the brigade who can salute with his foot to his cap, instead of his hand."

"*Mais, vous vous moquez de moi?*" replied the other.

"I never was more serious, I assure you. He is as well known through the army for his antics, as Mazurier in France; *au reste,* Providence has gifted him with a brain, which is rather what you call, *sens dessus dessous;* and he now makes use of his head for the only purpose for which it is fit."

"*Parbleu!*" exclaimed the foreigner; "what would our *Vieille Garde* have said, had they seen a *chef de bataillon* in such a strange position!"

"Oh, they would most probably have taken it for granted that he had lost his head in battle, and had nobly chosen to die with his legs

in the air, in order to verify the fact, that '*La Garde meurt, mais elle ne recule pas.*'"

The Frenchman did not much like the irony of Sir Harry's remark, but demanded if that was in reality a *Milor*, adding; "the Parisians would be somewhat astonished if they were to see a peer of France caracolling in one of Pleyel's pianos, at the academy of Music."

"I do not suppose that his privilege would save him from being locked up as a madman, at Charenton," returned Sir Harry; "and it would be no great loss to the nation, if that young man had one of the chords under his feet fastened round his neck: excuse the pun, I hate them!" Added he gravely, "from what you see this evening, you suppose of course that our peers conduct their discussions in the senate by proxy, and merely appear *in propria persona*, when there is a debate at the theatre."

"Who is the little man with the great stomach, round rosy face, and white wig?" demanded the foreigner; "is it the *Milor Maire?*".

"That is Mr. Townshend, the police-officer, by far the greatest personage in his way in London: without him no *fête* is complete. Though you see he has not much influence over the mobility; yet he is wonderfully successful in keeping our female nobility in order. I've seen him trot off many an old duchess with a good scolding, who has kept other people's carriages from advancing whilst she gossipped in the hall. He is a sort of privileged person, whose great merit consists in his innocent inutility."

Their attention was now again attracted towards the stage, which was the scene of the direst confusion, for lamps, chandeliers, and scenery were going to ruin. It was to no purpose that the officer on duty remonstrated; he was buffeted and pushed about most unmercifully; and it was with as little effect, that the sentinels, unfixing their bayonets to prevent mischief, attempted to protect their post—overwhelmed by numbers, they were fairly driven from the stage, where the

efforts of the police were equally unsuccessful. All the *corps de ballet* had either been put to the rout, or were paralyzed with fear. The Sun, from sheer terror, revolved the wrong way. Time stood still: one of the Hours followed his example, or scampered off, like a watch when its spring is broken. The Seasons were confused: Winter escaping with Summer by her side, followed by Spring, assisted Autumn to descend from a cloud. The Tritons scampered off across the dry shore, like Bo-Peep's sheep, leaving their tails behind them. Groups of Cupids and Loves were fighting for the safest place in the infernal Regions.

The Graces were abusing some young men for behaving rudely. Pegasus was seen running down Parnassus on his hind legs; and Jupiter's eagle came crying with his finger in his mouth, from the summit of his pasteboard eyrie; which, together with Olympus itself, was fast crumbling to pieces beneath the destructive hands of the belligerents. Whilst

this was going on upon the stage, ladies were fainting in the boxes, or rushing out to their carriages, whose drivers (from the whole of the Guards and constables being called into the house) were cutting, slashing, and swearing, and presented a scene of uproar and confusion in perfect keeping with that which their masters were so disgracefully carrying on within. Nor was it until a strong reinforcement of police had arrived, that the property of the managers was secured from farther destruction, though of course all idea of continuing the spectacle was at an end. The worthy public, being quite satisfied with the damage they had done for their half-guinea; and with the retrospection of this pleasure, so dear to a free and liberal mind, retired perfectly contented with the night's performance, caring as little for Gambelli as they did for the beautiful deity whom they wished her to represent.

CHAPTER X.

TRUE to his promise, and panting for the long-desired ticket, which was destined to open the envied portals of Willis's Rooms for his admittance, Mr. Botts hastened, in the course of two or three days subsequent to the dinner at Sir Gore Hashwell's, to announce to Lady Catesby the success of his mission. His eye, in trembling anxiety, wandering during their conversation towards the chimney-piece, where he saw the talismanic words, "*Gentleman's Voucher,*" imprinted on a card: but, alas! it was that of Sir Lawrence. In reply to Lady Catesby's questions, Mr. Botts stated that all original documents and papers had been removed from Mr. Thorp's office to Milton Park, but that duplicates, in the handwriting of Sir Herbert, were still remaining in Lincoln's Inn. It was, therefore, agreed that her Ladyship should drive on the following

morning to Mr. Thorp's chambers (who was absent with the Baronet in the country), where she might examine the documents at her leisure, having first given her sacred promise not to compromise Mr. Botts's future brother-in-law.

Hard-hearted and callous as Lady Catesby had ever shewn herself to every sentiment of honour or principle; indifferent as she had hitherto been to the means by which she could attain the object of her passion or ambition, yet the examination of these papers filled her mind with dismay and astonishment. Among the first papers which caught her eye was the copy of a baptismal register, with other documents, by which it appeared beyond all question, that Emily Manby was the illegitimate daughter of Sir Herbert Milton; that he had already provided for her through the agency of Mr. Thorp, and that a farther sum of ten thousand pounds was settled upon her by his will. Great as Lady Catesby's surprise was at this discovery, it was surpassed by the horror and

disgust which she felt at the cold-blooded and atrocious villany of Alfred Milton; who, being evidently aware of this circumstance, not only concealed it from his cousin, but had actually encouraged him to the commission of an act at which the mind revolts; and this too, with the precarious and detestable hope that the tardy discovery of this dreadful secret would break his cousin's heart, or drive him to suicide or madness. "Wretch! monster!" muttered Lady Catesby, as she returned the papers into the box containing the certificate, "villain! no wonder you dared not trust your secret to me;" but commanding her feelings, she turned to the clerk, who stood by her side, and merely said, "Has Mr. Milton had access to the whole of these papers?" After some hesitation the young man replied in the affirmative.

"Are you yourself aware of their contents, Sir?" continued her Ladyship, fixing her eyes on the man sternly, with an air of dignity and authority which she well knew how to assume.

"No, my lady; on my honour I am not!" rejoined the other.

"Your honour, Sir!" returned Lady Catesby, with a look of disdain; "will you make oath of the fact of the whole of these documents having been perused by Mr. Milton, and that you are utterly ignorant of their nature."

"I will, Madam, if you require it," rejoined the clerk; "I can solemnly swear that I have no idea of their nature. I confess, that I yielded to the entreaties of Mr. Botts, to permit his friend Mr. Alfred Milton to examine if there was any copy of a will or other document amongst his uncle's papers, which might assist him, as I understood, in raising money; but he never communicated the result of his search to me, nor had I any curiosity to inquire into a matter in which I could have no concern."

"Enough, Sir!" exclaimed Lady Catesby. "I conclude you will have no objection to sign a paper to this effect, and to give me your

solemn assurance not to communicate what has passed this morning either to Mr. Milton or to any other human being."

The clerk appearing to hesitate, Lady Catesby continued, "Well, Sir; if you refuse,—look to yourself; I shall instantly expose you to Sir Herbert and your employer."

The young man at length consented to her demand; and her Ladyship, having made two or three short notes, left the chambers, and proceeded with all possible speed to Colonel Milton's residence. The thought of performing a virtuous action for the mere purpose of virtue itself, the idea of exposing herself to save others from danger, was a novel feeling in the bosom of Lady Catesby; but the effect of Mr. Milton's unheard-of villany caused a revolution in her mind as new as it was unexpected; and she resolved, let the consequences be what they might to herself, to rescue Herbert, if possible, from the gulf into which he was about to plunge. On arriving

in Green-street, she found that the Colonel had been absent some days from London, and that directions had been received to forward his letters to Keswick. Coupling this with Miss Manby's departure for the North, the probability of the immediate occurrence of what had in fact taken place, first struck her. Her next impulse was to have proceeded at once to Sir Lawrence, and after explaining the circumstances to him, to urge him to write instantly to Colonel Milton; but before she took this step, she resolved to communicate her discovery to Madame de Geigenklang.

Hastening, therefore, to the abode of the latter, she immediately disclosed the occurrences of the morning; and it may be imagined with what dreadful sensations the kind-hearted Baroness received this intelligence. No time, however, was to be lost. It was forthwith determined, that a letter should be instantly despatched to Herbert by express. Having enclosed the certificate, together with Lady Catesby's notes and the clerk's signa-

ture, the Baroness wrote a few lines to the following effect:—

"MY DEAR HERBERT,

"It is my painful duty to communicate a discovery which has been made within the last few hours at your father's solicitor's. Prepare your mind for the most frightful blow—Miss Manby is your sister! It is true beyond a doubt. Horrible as this information may be, it would be cruel in me to conceal it. God grant that this may arrive in time to prevent! —the thought makes me shudder. That wretch, your cousin Alfred, has long been aware of this circumstance—we have undoubted proofs of it, as you will perceive by the enclosed paper, signed by Mr. Thorp's clerk. Come to London immediately. Under all circumstances, my affection for Emily, my regard for you, never can change. Forgive this hasty scrawl,—a few minutes may be of the utmost importance. Adieu! I am so agitated I can scarcely hold my pen."

On Herbert's departure from Keswick, he had requested Emily to open all letters which might be addressed to him, begging her to forward those which required answers, or reserve them until his return, as she might consider necessary.

It was on the morning subsequent to his quitting her that the Baroness's messenger reached the end of his journey. Leaving the chaise at the inn, he hastened to Miss Manby's lodgings, and desired the letter might be instantly carried up-stairs, without even inquiring if Colonel Milton was there. Being informed that an express had arrived, and that the letter was of the utmost importance, Emily for the first time ventured to exercise the privilege intrusted to her by her husband, and immediately tore open the envelope. Mrs. Walden, who was employed in an adjoining room, was almost instantly attracted to the spot by a violent scream. Hurrying into the apartment, she saw her young friend stare for a moment wildly around, and then clasping

both hands to her forehead, sink upon her knees, as if in an attitude of prayer, and then burst into a long loud hysteric laugh, succeeded by a death-like stillness, and a vacancy of look even more dreadful. The unhappy creature rose, but she neither wept nor spoke. Snatching up the envelope of the letter, she buried it hastily in her bosom, and stood unconscious of Mrs. Walden's presence, merely uttering in a low and lengthened tone, the monosyllable, "Hush!" To ring for assistance, to send for medical aid, and to cast her eye rapidly over the letter, which had fallen to the ground, was but the work of a moment for Mrs. Walden; its contents were sufficient—the horrid cause of this cruel scene was revealed. It was evident that Emily's mind, unable to support the shock, had given way. She was no longer conscious of her sufferings or their cause—reason had fled! Though in a state of mental distraction, scarcely less pitiable than that of the miserable Emily, Mrs. Walden had sufficient strength left to enclose the Baroness's

letter to Colonel Milton, with these accompanying words:—"She knows all! but God has in mercy deprived her of consciousness; reason would now be more horrible to her than death. My dear friend, I pity you from my soul!"

But we must now return to the afflicting scene at Milton Park. The noise of Colonel Milton's fall drew the attention of the servants, as well as of Lady Milton, almost instantly towards the Baronet's apartment, and the sight which struck them on their entrance was most appalling. On the side of the bed, from which he had made a violent effort to spring, lay Sir Herbert Milton, bleeding profusely. On the floor was extended his son, senseless and cold as if the hand of death were on him. Unable to support this heart-rending scene, Lady Milton was carried away swooning, whilst prompt assistance was afforded to both the sufferers. The physician soon declared that the second rupture of the blood-vessel was of that alarming nature as

to preclude all hope of saving Sir Herbert's life. Every remedy which science or skill could devise was employed to arrest the progress of the frightful hemorrhage, but in vain. The unfortunate gentleman merely lived to pronounce his blessing and forgiveness of his son, and to implore the Divine mercy upon himself for that want of confidence, that unhappy concealment, which had caused this dreadful catastrophe, and of which he accused himself alone as the author; and ere Herbert awoke to a consciousness of his loss, his father had ceased to breathe.

It would be a vain effort to attempt to depict the agony of Colonel Milton's mind upon recovering from the state of stupor into which he had fallen; the last words of his father's dreadful exclamation, "She is your sister!" rung in his ears with a thrilling sensation, as if a hundred demons had re-echoed it to his senses. Staring wildly at Lady Milton, who, in despite of her own sufferings, hung watching and weeping near his couch,

the unhappy young man was no sooner restored to his faculties than he rose and exclaimed, in ignorance yet of his father's death—

"It must be a dream! it cannot be true—impossible! He said it but to put my fortitude to the test. I will go to him this instant, this mystery must be unravelled."

"Stay, stay, my darling child!" rejoined Lady Milton, throwing her arms around the neck of her son, and resting her tearful cheek upon his shoulder,—"It is too late! you are fatherless! I am without a hope in life but you. Your father is no more!"

"Dead! say you," vociferated Herbert with an almost frantic start; "Dead! then the fruits of my disobedience are parricide and murder, for she cannot survive the intelligence," and he shook his head with a shudder of disgust; then raising his hands upwards, he added, "Father of Mercy, spare her, and wreak thy vengeance on my disobedient head alone! She is innocent—pure as the light of Heaven—I—I alone am culpable!"

Poor Lady Milton, who was ignorant of the circumstances which had produced the dreadful catastrophe, now for the first time comprehended that her son was married to Emily, and that the intimation of this event had, most probably, caused that violent exertion or excess of passion which had terminated so fatally. But we must pass over the effect of the horrible secret when fully explained to the wretched Lady Milton, whose distress it would be impossible adequately to describe.

The thought of life in his present situation was to Herbert insupportable; he coveted death as an immediate release from his misery. Yet the perpetration of self-murder, the idea of rushing unbidden into Eternity, made him shudder with horror. It was not the fear of death itself which caused him to pause, for to this his heart was a stranger; but those principles which it had been the study of his mother and preceptor to inculcate, now had their effect, and deterred him from so desperate a resolution. The means, how-

ever, of instantly terminating his agony were temptingly within his reach; his case of loaded pistols stood upon the table: he paused —looked at them—the image of his father gone for ever—the thought of Emily dying—both, as it were, murdered by his disobedience, arose before him. The words "Sister, Sister," rung in his ears, and prompted him to destruction. An icy chillness crept through his veins. He staggered to the table—opened the case—hastily took forth one of the deadly instruments, and gazed at it with a look of satisfaction, as if oblivion of the past was lodged within the murderous tube. Sinking upon his knee, he prayed long and fervently: by degrees he became more calm and resigned; and when he arose, the idea of suicide had passed from his mind, and he cast from him the fatal weapon with horror. As his mind became more tranquil he was gradually enabled to meditate upon his present circumstances, and the line of conduct necessary to be pursued. He flattered himself that no one

but his mother was aware of the degree of affinity which existed between himself and Emily, and he was resolved to destroy every document, if any were in existence, which could betray the secret to Emily herself, and that he would forthwith quit England never to return. Upon reflection, it was evident that it was to papers relative to this subject, to which his father had alluded; and, terrible as the effort might be, he determined without delay to satisfy himself upon this point.

With a firm and resolute step, though with an agonized heart, he now proceeded to the chamber of his deceased parent. Upon his entrance he found the old butler watching with a Bible in his hand, near the remains of his late master; whilst the faithful Indian knelt near the foot of the bed, his face bending towards the ground, ashes strewed around him, and his head and part of his person concealed by the loosened folds of his white turban. A couple of wax tapers cast a melancholy and uncertain light across the room.

Colonel Milton had often witnessed death in a thousand fearful and distressing shapes, but never had he felt those indescribable sensations which came over him at this moment. His heart beat violently: advancing with cautious silence, as if the noise of his step could have aroused the senseless dead from his last slumber, Colonel Milton threw himself on his knees by the bed-side, and buried his face in his hands, as if by this act he could have excluded all consciousness from his mind; a flood of tears came to his relief —they were the first he had shed during this eventful night. With a melancholy look he gazed on the features of his deceased parent, and then slowly returning to his own apartment, carried with him the object of his search. Upon opening the case, the first thing which met Colonel Milton's sight, were the papers relative to Emily. One was inscribed "Baptismal certificate of Ellen Milton," the other, "Memoir concerning my daughter, to be destroyed when perused by

Colonel Milton." Hastily casting his eyes over the first, Herbert threw it aside, and proceeded to examine the contents of the second. This document, drawn up in the hand-writing of Sir Herbert, explained every circumstance attending the early history of his daughter, his motives for concealing his affinity to her from every person excepting Mr. Thorp, together with the extraordinary feelings which influenced his conduct towards the Manbys.

It would be superfluous to enter more fully into the contents of this curious manuscript, which presented a mixture of weakness, yet control over his own feelings, a picture of false pride and erroneous notions of regard for his own character, indifference, and at the same time respect for the delicacy of Lady Milton, scarcely to be understood or credited. In short, it was a tissue of the strangest and most contradictory anomalies, consistent alone in proving the dire effects of that want of confidence and exaggerated pride which marked his character through life. Suffice it

to say, that it contained an account of the illegitimacy of Emily, a circumstance which he was anxious to conceal from Lady Milton, and, indeed, from the whole world; and of his having therefore resolved to forward the child to Europe, where he intended she should be brought up, and educated by his agent, as the orphan of a distant relation of the latter; ample funds for her immediate wants and future establishment in life being allotted for this purpose. Having mourned the child as lost, and little suspecting it to have been that which was rescued from the waves by the sailor, its description differing in many points from that of his own infant, especially as far as regarded the chain and locket, his surprise and emotion at discovering its identity at Major Manby's was excessive. He rejoiced at the salvation of the child, was grateful to the Manbys for its preservation, and yet his pride not only induced him to renounce it, but caused him to fly from the society of those who had so humanely adopted it. Several

times he was on the point of confiding the subject to Mr. Manby and his wife; but the thought of becoming an object of derision to the world, and of lowering himself in the opinion of his inferiors, prevented him. What he had refrained from avowing in the first instance from selfishness, he was at a later period restrained from declaring from delicacy to his daughter, who being received and noticed in the world, might, he feared, be disgraced, if her real origin were known. When he discovered, that by an extraordinary fatality a serious attachment had arisen between his children, which could be obviated by no other means, then he resolved to admit his son to his tardy confidence. Completely deceived by his nephew on this point, and little imagining that his son would have the temerity to carry matters to any serious extremity without his knowledge, the Baronet had determined to delay his confidence until his return to London. Won over, however, by the continued flattering reports which he heard of Herbert from

every quarter, and by the reflections produced by his accident, which might delay him some time in the country, he had resolved to send for his son to Milton Park, and at once to make him the depository of this important secret.

Having perused this document, Herbert was not long in coming to a determination as to his own plans. Master of the estates and fortune of his father, he was resolved to leave the whole at the disposal of his mother, and as soon as the last duties were performed to his late parent, to quit England for ever. It was his wish to conceal the dreadful truth from Emily at all events, until time had softened her distress at losing him. Under the pretext of sparing her the pain of a second separation, he resolved to write and inform her of his having accepted the Staff situation, and of his wish to proceed immediately to the Continent, lest he should arrive too late to share in the glories which his countrymen were reaping on the soil of France itself;

though Herbert could not conceal from his own heart, that the desire of meeting an honourable and speedy death, was the predominant motive which influenced his mind in taking this step. That he could ever see Emily again was impossible: not less impossible was it for him to disclose the truth. On every side, was doubt, distress, and perplexity. He resolved, however, to write to Keswick, to announce his sudden departure, but to conceal his motives.

"My conduct will kill her," said he to himself, in the utmost agony; "but rather let her die thinking me guilty of cruelty, of every crime, than that the dreadful reality should ever be unfolded to her." The inutility of these precautions is already known, and he was not only apprised of the distressing occurrence which had taken place at Keswick by Mrs. Walden's note, but the delinquency of Alfred's conduct was confirmed by Mr. Thorp, whose clerk, dreading the discovery of his breach of trust, had written to his em-

ployer, and confessed the whole circumstance of his having communicated, or rather given access to Sir Herbert's papers both to Alfred and Lady Catesby.

Blow after blow seemed to be levelled in rapid succession at the miserable Herbert. He now remembered, and alas! too late deplored his having disregarded the warning of Sidney, the positive declarations of Lady Catesby, and the assertions of Perez relative to the withdrawing his letters. It was plain also, that Alfred must have been the person who had succeeded in poisoning his father's mind against him, and he saw at once that Sir Herbert as well as himself had been duped and betrayed by the deep laid schemes of this most artful hypocrite. Herbert's mind, shocked and disgusted with this discovery, was bewildered in this maze of atrocity. Alfred was expected at Milton Park, and his cousin at once dreaded and longed for his arrival, determining to wreak his vengeance upon him in the most summary manner. The

interval between this period and the arrival of the former at the Hall, was passed by Herbert in attending upon his mother, and in regulating his affairs with Mr. Thorp. On inspecting the will of the late Baronet, it appeared that the whole of the property, personal and landed, was bequeathed to Herbert, with reversion in default of legitimate male issue to Alfred and his heirs. A jointure of two thousand five hundred pounds per annum was settled on Lady Milton; a legacy of twenty thousand pounds was left to Alfred, half that sum to Emily, and five thousand pounds to Mrs. Walden, with sundry other smaller donations, especially a very handsome annuity to poor Singée.

During this interval, Herbert made his own will, appointed Sidney and Lord Seabridge his executors, and secured his mother and Emily as much as possible from any ill-treatment or chicanery on the part of Alfred; though to his sorrow Colonel Milton found, that in the event of his own death, it would be impossible for

him to prevent his cousin from taking possession of Milton Park, and immediately driving from its walls his unhappy mother. This idea alone gave him a desire for life, though it was a transitory feeling. It was on the morning of the fourth day after the death of his uncle, that Alfred arrived at the Park, though in complete ignorance that his villanous duplicity had been revealed. Springing from his carriage, and hastening into the house, with an air of extreme grief and emotion he advanced towards Herbert, whom he found sitting alone in the library. An instant's inspection of Colonel Milton's gathering countenance and fierce expression sufficed to prove to Alfred that he was discovered, and with singular audacity he prepared to meet the storm. As he approached, Herbert started back, and thrust from him with disdain the proffered hand, darting at Alfred a look of fury and contempt. Herbert rushed to the door, locked it, withdrew the key, and then at one bound he sprang on his cousin, and seized him with both hands by

the throat. Gazing at him for a few seconds, he exclaimed in a loud and thrilling tone, "Damnable! most accursed hypocrite! how dare you intrude yourself into the house which you have converted into a very tomb,—wretch!" and with frightful energy he lifted him from the ground in despite of his struggles, and hurled him backwards to the very opposite end of the apartment; then, as the fallen villain was raising himself, he sprang to the table, took his pistols from a drawer, and again advanced towards him. "Are you mad? have you lost your senses? is it your intention to commit murder?" exclaimed Alfred, recovering himself, and folding his arms across his breast.

"Infamous scoundrel!" retorted Herbert, "if you have one grain of manly spirit take this, and give me satisfaction. Obtain your accursed ends by taking the life you have long sought, or let me revenge my manifold wrongs upon your miscreant head. There! there, accursed liar and traitor! there!" vociferated

Herbert, with a voice of thunder, accompanying his words with several blows.

Paler than death, and trembling from limb to limb with rage, Alfred had, however, the power over himself to endure this degrading treatment, and to reply with consummate *sang froid*—"If it is your intention, Sir Herbert Milton, to add murder to your other crime, here is my breast—fire!"—and with a smile of insolent contempt he bared his bosom.

Petrified with astonishment at the coolness and self-possession of his relative, Herbert stood for some seconds riveted to the spot.

"So, Sir," resumed the other, quickly taking advantage of the effect which his cool behaviour had produced, "in despite of my advice you chose to marry; did I not recommend you to obey your father? did I not point out to you the foolish sacrifice you were about to make? did I not warn you to renounce her in favour of Lord Seabridge?—can you deny it?—No, Sir, you cannot;—and pray what

right had I to betray your father's secrets, discovered by accident?"

"Atrocious hypocrite!" retorted Herbert.

"This language suits your mad and hasty conduct," quietly replied the other: "if you choose, in despite of the opinion of your friends, in defiance of your father's injunctions, to disregard reason and common-sense, to gratify a romantic and unholy attachment, is it my fault? Would you murder me, Sir, because you have married your sister?"

The increasing effrontery and undaunted boldness of Alfred nearly deprived Herbert of the faculty of speech or motion; but after a pause, he again advanced towards the former, and said,—"Coward! disgraceful coward! can nothing arouse the feelings of a man within your miserable heart," and he again struck him in the most ignominious manner, adding, "Wretch! unless you give me instant satisfaction, I will call in my servants and horsewhip you in their presence!"

"Do so, Sir," rejoined his cousin, "do so;

let your domestics see how their new master mourns for the loss of his father. Let me announce to them that you have married your own sister, and ere the breath has scarcely left the body of your father, let them be witnesses to your attempt to murder his nephew —if that is your intention, Sir, proceed; I am at your mercy, and the more witnesses to the deed the better."

"Are you a man, or some demon in human shape? your effrontery is inconceivable," returned Colonel Milton.

"I am simply your cousin, Sir," replied the other coolly, "unarmed too and in your power; but I should advise you, young man, to calm your passions. Do you wish your connexion—marriage, Sir, it cannot be called —to be made public? I have borne enough, but my revenge is to come. Lift up your hand again, and if I escape without being assassinated from this room, I publish your story to the world; I will every where make known that the good, the immaculate, the

worthy Colonel Sir Herbert Milton has merely married his sister."

"God of Heaven!" said Herbert, "grant me strength to support this wretch's villany!" and it was with the utmost difficulty that he could restrain his finger from pulling the trigger of his pistol and shooting him to the heart.

Seeing, however, that there was no possibility of exciting Alfred to give him honourable satisfaction, and really dreading lest he should be excited to commit murder, he dashed his pistols through the glass of the window into the park, and then throwing himself into a chair he said, "Contemptible coward! you are too worthless to die by the hands of a man of honour; it is perhaps the will of Providence that you should be reserved for some more infamous punishment: but," added he, "your very sight is loathsome to me; quit the house forthwith, or I must direct the servants to thrust you out," and Herbert then rose and moved towards the bell.

"A moment, Sir," replied the other. "I

have reason to conclude that your father has provided for me in his will, and that this place is entailed on me and mine. That is not sufficient: I want money—and have a proposition to make."

"I will hear nothing, Sir!" exclaimed Herbert. "Fly, fly! and tempt me not again to degrade myself by striking you to the earth in the presence of my household," and he rung the bell.

"One word, Sir," returned the other: "you are most probably anxious to conceal this business from the world; if so, make over to me by bond and power of attorney an annuity of two thousand pounds: on that condition I remain silent; if not, I publish the whole."

Though appalled by this atrocious effrontery, Herbert paused and considered for awhile.

"Your silence," said he at length, "even if it were possible to trust to your word, can now be of no avail; it is already known to Lady Catesby and the Baroness."

"Lady Catesby!" retorted the other, "Oh! she is the cause of this discovery, is she? Never mind, Sir, you need not fear her; I can and will seal up her mouth for ever! The Baroness is, I conclude, too much your friend to expose you, and I should suppose that fellow Thorp is as little likely to betray the secret now as he was fifteen years past: but the servants are approaching.—Do you accept my offer?"

"Leave the huose instantly!" replied Herbert, unlocking the door; "I can have no farther intercourse with you; Mr. Thorp shall communicate my answer. Go, Sir,—Mr. Milton's carriage!—Go, wretch! your very presence is a tenfod aggravation of my sufferings," and he turned from him with a shudder.

"I will give you three days to consider," said Alfred, as he left the room; and then quitting the house with an air of incredible composure, he entered his carriage, and was soon again on his road to London, leaving

his cousin in a state of amazement and horror at his conduct, not less agonizing than the grief he suffered from so many accumulated sources.

After mature deliberation with his mother and his professional adviser, Mr. Thorp, it was determined that Alfred's proposition, base as it was, should be complied with, under the most severe restrictions; and thus was Alfred put in possession of the first fruits of his monstrous iniquity.

Having performed the last sad rites to his father, Herbert, in the course of a few days, bade adieu to his mother.

Accompanied by his faithful servant, and his poor dumb favourite, Colonel Milton quitted the abode of his ancestors amidst the heartfelt tears of all those who, a few months previous, had received him with so much joy, and who looked forward to his living long amongst them, an honour to his family, a comfort to his dependants, and a pride to his country.

Merely waiting a few hours in London to transact some necessary business, Herbert immediately proceeded to Plymouth, and in a few days joined the army which had already advanced into France.

CHAPTER XI.

As soon as Lady Milton had recovered sufficiently to address Mrs. Walden, she wrote a most affectionate and feeling letter to her, declaring her intention of proceeding to Keswick, the moment the state of her health permitted her to undertake the journey: at the same time earnestly expressing her desire of sharing with Mrs. Walden the painful duty of watching over and protecting the unhappy child of her late husband. Mr. Thorp kindly undertook to be the bearer of this letter, with a view of communicating to Mrs. Walden not only the nature of the deceased Baronet's bequests, but the substance of those documents, which were so intimately connected with the early history of Emily, or rather, as she should now be called, Ellen Milton. In a few days subsequent to the departure of the worthy solicitor (who was one of those instances of

benevolence and disinterestedness rarely to be met with, *proh pudor!* in his profession), Lady Milton herself quitted the Park on her route to the North. Upon her Ladyship's arrival at Keswick no change had taken place in the situation of the unfortunate patient.

With the permission of the medical men, one of whom was in constant attendance, it was determined to remove the unhappy sufferer by easy stages to one of those lovely and sequestered villages on the Devonshire coast, where the retirement and salubrity of the climate might, it was hoped, prove beneficial to her.

These events, as well as the death of the Baronet, were, as usual, talked of for a few days; but as none of the parties were present, and vague reports only were in circulation, public curiosity quickly died away, and the whole were nearly as much forgotten as if they never had been in existence. Here and there a few persons, whose speculations upon Herbert's fortune had been destroyed by his

marriage, were heard to express themselves to their daughters with some degree of pettishness, and of course a considerable portion of ill-nature.

"How vastly fortunate, my dear, just to marry at the moment the papa was going to die! how very comfortable not to have any trouble or plague. I dare say, he knew the old Indian was desperately ill, and thought it a bore to wait the usual time for mourning. But after all, I understand the Rajah did not cut up so rich as was expected, not near: indeed, it would have been no great catch. Every thing entailed on Mr. Alfred Milton: by-the-bye, I think he is so superior to the other—no ready money, no timber, no advantages, that I can see: a mere life tenant. I think you have had a lucky escape. He was a strange melancholy *chat-houant*, hamlety kind of young man, always affecting the *Père Noble;* he gave me the idea of a sort of male Castle Spectre: and then, my dear, as for his rank, Lord bless me! Baronets are now-a-

days as common as those eternal Knights Commanders. Dear me! every one is 'My Lady.' The servants say now they cannot even go to Sadler's Wells, without seeing a whole string of these ephemeral, non-generating ladies, stuck up like a parcel of mule birds in the boxes, vastly vulgar creatures most of them!" But we have not space to pursue the train of observations which this subject gave rise to; we will, therefore, hasten to follow the young Baronet into France.

Before Sir Herbert proceeded to take upon himself the duties of the Staff situation, to which he had been appointed, he determined to pay a visit to Sidney, whose gallant corps formed part of the division occupied in the siege, or rather blockade, of Bayonne. The surprise of Sidney at the appearance of his friend, was only equalled by the distress he felt at remarking the melancholy change which a few weeks had wrought in Herbert's appearance. He was reduced to a mere skeleton, a miserable wreck: his features

were pale and haggard; his cheeks sunken: the brilliant animation of his eyes had given way to a dull and melancholy languor. In fact, so much was the kind-hearted Sidney affected at this alteration, that he could not avoid turning aside to conceal his emotion, as he warmly pressed the hand of his unhappy friend. The intelligence of Herbert's marriage, as well as the death of his father, had not reached Sidney many days; and although he forbore to question him upon the motives of his sudden appearance, yet it was evident some dreadful event had occurred to induce him to quit his young bride so soon after their union. Was he disinherited? This could not have caused such misery, since Sidney was aware that Herbert had anticipated the possibility of such an occurrence. Was she dead! He dared not ask, and yet he feared this was the only circumstance which could have reduced his friend to this state of suffering.

"Ask me no questions at present, my dear

Sidney," said Herbert, "I see you are shocked at my miserable appearance; but that which meets your eye is Heaven to the agony that torments my mind. I shall, perhaps, in the course of a day or two, have courage to communicate to you events that will make your blood run cold, but at present I am unequal to the task. I am come to remain a few days with you; they are, perhaps, the last we may ever pass together."

"God forbid!" exclaimed Sidney with emphasis. "No, my dear fellow, the business here appears to be drawing to a close; we hear from every quarter that the Allies are rapidly advancing upon Paris, and in a few days peace will be signed, and we shall be ordered home."

"My intention is never to return," replied Herbert solemnly: "but no more of this. I thought of you as I passed through London; I have letters from the Dropmores for you. But now," said he, "as I have not much time to spare, let me pay a visit to some of my old

companions; and then taking Sidney's arm, the friends proceeded through the camp for this purpose.

The war had now arrived at that crisis, which not only promised repose to Europe, but the most speedy and glorious termination to the exertions of the British army. On one side, the Northern Allies were marching with hasty strides and overwhelming numbers towards the French capital; on another, the natives of Gascony, La Vendée, and other provinces, had already hoisted the banners of revolt, and were rallying round the standards of their legitimate princes; whilst the army under Wellington, that small, intrepid, and irresistible host, had worked its way with undaunted constancy and valour from the shores of the Guadalquivir to the banks of the Adour. Already the glad tidings of approaching peace began to be whispered, even amidst the ranks of the soldiers; dreams of home, of England, of dear loved Old England, so long banished from their expectations, again filled

the thoughts of the sun-burnt warriors; already the veterans thought of once more pressing to their hearts their wives and children; the sparkling roofs of their native cottages, the blooming valleys of their Father-land again rose before them; whilst the young soldiers dreamed of their mothers, their sisters, and perhaps of the village maiden, who eagerly awaited to greet their return, or the wondering ears which would listen to hear the glories of Badajoz or Vittoria. But the Demon of War, not yet satisfied with the hecatombs of blood which had been offered up at his sanguinary shrine, still demanded a farther sacrifice.

The plains of Bayonne and Toulouse were doomed to bear witness to the valour of England's sons, and to prove that the descendants of those men who conquered at Cressy and at Agincourt, were still destined to sustain the glory of their forefathers, and to pluck the feathers from the wing of the eagle upon its very eyry, as in olden times they had torn up

the lilly by the root and bound it to their nation's banner. Alas! those days which added fresh laurels to the wreaths which already crowned the brows of England's warriors, were destined to plunge her citizens in grief and lamentation. She had yet to deplore some of the best, the noblest spirits of her land. Brave and valiant souls! how many of you, who had already looked forward to the dear delights of home and kindred, who saw the smiling faces of your wives, your children, hanging in fond pride over the scars which told your battles, and your victories: how many of you, on whom were fixed the only hopes of some widowed mother, some orphan child, in whose brave image reposed the earthly happiness of some betrothed maiden; how many of you, alas! were yet doomed to perish at the very threshold of your homes, nay,—as it were, with the banners of peace floating over your heads!

These were the meditations, or rather observations of Sidney at a later period, when,

with a sorrowful heart, he recounted to the gentle Mary Dropmore, his destined bride, the fatal yet glorious results of those two bloody days: when he named to her, with all the enthusiasm of a soldier, the chivalrous brave who had perished, thrice nobly perished, and told her of the valiant deeds of those who had survived. With the noble spirit of a descendant of warriors, the destined bride of a soldier, Miss Dropmore fondly pressed the shattered remnant of Harry Sidney's arm, and gazing at him replied, whilst the tear stood on her bright blue eye, "When you fell from your horse, Henry, in the chase, and the surgeons declared you must lose your arm, I pitied you, and thought how much you would be disfigured, but now I glory in this maimed limb, and you are embellished by it a thousand times in my sight."

But we are anticipating events.—After visiting the officers of his regiment, Sir Herbert Milton proceeded to make inquiries for some of his more humble, but not less faithful

friends, and it was with the most painful feelings that he remarked the numerous vacancies which sickness or the sword had caused amongst the ranks of these brave men since the period of his quitting them in Spain. The soldiers, whose discipline and natural deference, even for the most beloved of their officers, prevented their expressing their joy aloud at seeing the young Colonel, immediately, however, pressed around their old ally "the Corporal." Hands were thrust into havresacks, and morsels of their scanty fare were produced. The dog, who quickly recognised several old friends among the men, shewed evident symptoms of pleasure and satisfaction at finding himself once more amidst his former companions. He jumped upon the shoulders of one grenadier, looked in the face of another, sniffed out with wonderful sagacity a third, and took the whole brawny hand of a fourth (which had been extended to caress him) playfully into his mouth; now carrying off in frolic some article of dress or

equipment, and then, after performing several circles, bringing it back to its owner's feet, proud, as it were, to shew that he had not forgotten the accomplishments which his preceptors had formerly taught him.

Fatigued with his day's journey and subsequent ramble, Herbert and Sidney had at an early hour retired to bed—if throwing themselves, half-dressed, upon a mattress in their cloaks might be so called. But the frequent alerts which had been given by the enemy, indeed the long habit acquired both by officers and soldiers, of being ready to assemble at the alarm-post at a moment's notice, had rendered this mode of reposing not only necessary, but almost as salutary as if they were enjoying all the comforts of the softest couch. An hour had not elapsed ere Sidney was aroused by a deep growl from the Corporal, who had sprung to the opening of the tent, and to his great surprise and alarm, he saw his friend struggling violently in the midst of the tent, cutting the air with his sword, and

exclaiming in a half-scream, half-groan, "Forward! forward! On, my lads, they fly!—Charge!—Hurrah! they fly!" Then suddenly starting back, putting his hands to his breast, he sunk on one knee, and added, "Leave me; look to yourselves; it is mortal;" then groaning forth the name of Emily, he sunk backwards on the ground.

It was evident to Sidney that his unhappy friend had been disturbed by some frightful dream. He looked for an instant—the night was calm and pitchy dark, and still almost as the grave. The dog stood at the tent entrance, his tail stiffened, his bristles erect, his eyes glistening like carbuncles; the animal seemed to express that kind of uneasy disappointment which these sagacious creatures are wont to do, when aroused without any definite cause. He sniffed, whined, scratched, and then returned to his place at the foot of the mattress. Herbert, in the mean time, lay motionless on the ground; it was plain the vision had passed, but he still breathed hea-

vily, and muttered to himself. Ere Sidney could move, for the purpose of arousing him, the sharp cracking report of a musket struck upon his ear. He listened,—all was still. In a few seconds another shot was heard; then two, three, and four irregular reports. Scarcely permitting himself to breathe, Sidney rose on his mattress, and listened with intense anxiety. The echo of a dozen guns came pealing on his ear, followed by the short, sharp, and compact roll of a much larger number. In an instant the death-like stillness which before reigned around, was broken; drums were heard beating in distant and various quarters; even the sharp, rattling, unmusical beat of the French was most distinct. The galloping of horses, the noise of feet, the clinking of arms, and the low buzzing of a thousand voices, aroused perhaps from slumber but to pass into eternal sleep, resounded on every side. A corporal hastily put his head into the tent, delivering the usual mechanical order, "Fall in directly, if you

please, Sir, at the alarm-post." Sidney sprung from his couch, awoke Herbert, exclaiming, "My dear Herbert, there is an alert; I must fly to my company!"

"Where am I?" answered the other, staring around him; "am I awake, or do I dream?"

"It is no dream," answered Sidney; "they are evidently at work with the picquets; the firing increases."

"Strange!" rejoined Herbert, in a melancholy voice; "then will this scene be realized!"

Appearing not to understand his friend, Sidney replied, "Stay here, my dear Milton; you have no right to move: you have no command. It is merely an affair of picquets, and will probably be over ere we can get under arms; so God bless you!" added Sidney, as hastily throwing on his cap and sword he was quitting the tent.

"A moment, Sidney," exclaimed Herbert; "I will to the spot, whatever it be. Should

any thing happen to me, Harry, take possession of that green case; it contains my will.—There are my keys and my watch, wear them for my sake; protect my mother and Emily—they will have need of your assistance."

"I swear it!" rejoined Sidney solemnly; adding, at the same time, "It is very foolish of you, Berty, to thrust yourself into an affair in which you have not the least occasion to expose yourself. It is clearly only a brush—hang it! they are determined not to spare gunpowder, however. Hark! how it rattles!"

The latter part of this conversation took place as the two officers were hastening to the alarm-post. It was evident, however, from the increasing and continued heavy roll of musquetry, that the matter was much more serious than Sidney had anticipated; and that instead of a simple *échaufferie* of outposts, it was in fact a determined and well-organized sortie of the whole garrison; for which, unfortunately, the British troops were in some measure unprovided. The general results of

this sanguinary though brief conflict are too well known—alas! too deeply imprinted on the minds of many of our readers, to render it necessary to enter into detail; we shall therefore confine ourselves to that portion in which Sir Herbert Milton took a share.

Guided by the perpetual rattling of the fire-arms, and now and then by the reflection of the blue-lights cast up by the enemy, which for an instant illuminated the bright barrels of their own soldiers, or glanced on the showy appointments of the English, Sir Herbert hastily pressed the hand of his friend to his heart, uttered the words "Remember the green case!" and then dashed forward, with the trusty Corporal at his heels, to the point where the struggle appeared most severe.

After bounding over several fences and walls, by which, however, he was diverted from the main attack, he at length found himself upon the precipitous bank of a deep and narrow lane, or water-course, where not only the firing and flashing of the guns, but the

shouts of the combatants, told him that a most deadly and obstinate struggle was going on. On one side were heard the voices of the French officers, who were encouraging and exciting their men with those strange mixtures of oaths and caresses common among them; "*En avant! en avant! Vive l'Empereur! Allons! Sacrés blanc Becs, en avant! Vivent les Braves! A bas ces Matins de rouge Gorges! en avant Conscrit, et la croix d'honneur est à toi!*" On the other side, the more calm and soldierlike orders of the English officers were audible as they restrained rather than excited the ardour of their people. "Steady, steady! No hurrying.—Steady, my lads!—lower your muzzles,—close up,—down with your bayonets.—Now for it!—Hurrah!—Charge!" Herbert bounded down the side of the declivity, with a blow of his sabre cut down one of the enemy, tore the musket from his hands, and threw himself at the head of the small body of men who were endeavouring to defend this most important and apparently neglected

pass. For a moment the overwhelming force, which was advancing, was repulsed by the impetuous fury of this little band. The French commander, naturally concluding from the desperate resistance opposed to him, that he had either been misinformed as to the strength of the post, or that strong reinforcements supported their rear, for a while paused, and seemed uncertain whether he should again advance. Herbert looked around him during the short interval which succeeded the charge: he was astonished at the handful of men who stood beside him. Their amount not exceeding fifty in the first instance, had been reduced to a third of that number; both its officers were killed or wounded, and there was scarcely one of the survivors whose blood was not flowing from his wounds. Every moment was precious; the support had evidently lost its way from the darkness of the night; the French were preparing for a second attack. Herbert closed in his men, and ordered them to retire, still facing the

enemy. A shout was heard in his rear: he cast his eye towards the lane; his heart beat. "Is it our support?" Alas! instead of friends, the flashing of the muskets shewed that the declivity was occupied with a cloud of the enemy's *tirailleurs*. Their retreat was cut off. All was lost. Determining to sell their lives as dearly as possible, the brave men collected in a circle. Herbert's blood trickled fast from his wounds, his strength was quickly ebbing: his brave companions were fast dropping under the deadly fire directed against them.

"Let us dash through them, lads," said Herbert to the bleeding veterans, who stood like columns of granite by his side; "we are few,—spread, and run for the wall. Leave me; I am mortally wounded."

"Not run, and leave your honour!" was the laconic reply of the brave men.

"Then follow me, comrades, whilst I have yet strength to lead you."

The French Colonel who commanded the

column of attack, astonished at the noble resistance made by this small body, who had been thus left, as it were, to perish without support, or to yield an important post, was not less struck with the gallantry of Herbert, whose rank was visible from his epaulets. Beating down the bayonets of his own people, and with that respect for true courage, which is no where more conspicuous than in the French army, the Colonel earnestly implored his brave adversary to surrender.

"*Rendez-vous, Colonel,*" said the officer, "*vous êtes un brâve. Vous vous defendre davantage seroit une folie. Allons, vous avez fait plusque votre devoir.*"

"They want us to surrender, lads," said Herbert to his men.

"What 's that?" was the significant answer. Then turning to the enemy, he exclaimed "*Jamais! jamais!*" as with a tremendous blow of the butt-end of his musket he dashed out the brains of the Frenchman who was advancing to take his sword; then

followed by his comrades he sprung with mad desperation amidst the foe. A rush, a waving, a rattling of arms took place: for a moment these desperate men drove back their assailants. The dark mass opened, and again closed. Oaths were intermingled with groans. The mass again opened, and again contracted into a narrower space. "*Tiens donc enragé!*" was uttered in a loud voice—a shot fell—Sir Herbert was seen to bound several feet from the ground. There was also a loud growl, succeeded by a feeble yelp of a dog. The air resounded with a shout of "*Vive l'Empereur, en avant!*" The black and heavy column marched over the spot where the combatants had stood; they pressed forward through the pass, where they found no opposition, until the combat was again resumed in another part of the field, and were at length driven back with tremendous slaughter within the precincts of the town.

Soon after the dawn of day, a flag of truce announced to either army the permission to

seek for the wounded, and to pay the last duties to the slain. A party had been despatched for this purpose to the point where the picquet had so gallantly fought; few were the survivors, and most of these severely wounded. The body of Sir Herbert was found lying upon his back, stripped of his epaulets and other ornaments, and pierced with a hundred wounds; within a few yards of him were also extended the lifeless corses of his gallant comrades; whilst close upon that of his master lay crouched the faithful Corporal. Though stabbed and wounded in several places, the noble animal was still alive! and as if regardless of his own sufferings, was seen endeavouring to lick the bloody gashes which scored the body of his dear-loved master; and though to all appearance unable to move, when the soldiers removed the remains of the Colonel, in order to convey them to the camp, the faithful creature made an effort to rise to defend it, but unable to stand, it faintly growled, reeled, staggered, and again

fell at the distance of a few paces. It was evident, however, that Sir Herbert and his comrades had not perished unrevenged; the slaughter of the enemy at the head of the ravine was tremendous; and to judge by the appearance of many of the slain, it was evident that the courageous dog had taken no small share in the desperate conflict.

Reports of the names and numbers of those who had fallen during the night were quickly brought to the camp, and the distress of Sidney at the loss of his friend was augmented by the impossibility of paying the last duties to his remains, and of writing to convey the melancholy intelligence to the now widowed and childless Lady Milton.

A musquet-ball having shattered Sidney's arm, immediate amputation had been resorted to, and as there appeared symptoms of fever, the greatest quiet and repose was positively enjoined. Upon examining the dog, which had been conveyed to the camp on the same bier with its master, it was with no small joy

that the worthy Canteen discovered symptoms of life in the animal; and since he was gone who had divided the affections of the faithful soldier with the poor dumb favourite, his whole thoughts were now turned to the recovery of the latter, and his efforts were eventually crowned with success.

"I would rather a lost my own leg, *Chucho*," said the brave soldier, as he watched over the poor beast, who was lying on his deceased master's cloak, and, to judge by the mournful way in which he licked the cloth, seemed sensible that he to whom it belonged was gone for ever. "I would rather a lost both my legs, and hobbled about Chelsea all my life, than that thee shouldst a died."

The animal wagged his tail, sidled or crouched nearer to the friendly hand which was patting his huge head, and looked at Canteen with an air of gratitude and sense almost human.

"You be all my Lady a got to console her now! poor cretur!" continued the soldier: "ah! it was a sad night for us all,—and then

there's that downcast, skulking fellow! d—n him! I suppose he has got all the fortune; and if he is the rogue I take him for, he wouldn't neither leave my young lady or my old one a tile over their heads, if he could help it! But," added the poor fellow, wiping the tears from his eyes with the back of his sun-burnt hand, "as long as I can work, they never shall want a willing heart to sarve 'em."

But we must interrupt Canteen's soliloquy, and return, in order to ascertain how far his conjectures of Alfred Milton were justly founded. The despatch which conveyed official information to England of Sir Herbert Milton's death, was received by his cousin with feelings of inward delight and satisfaction. The prize for which he had laboured and intrigued was now within his grasp! He knew that the shot which deprived his kinsman of life made him the possessor of his inheritance.

"This is as it should be!—this is indeed good news!—Let me see, seventeen thousand

a-year at least!" and he rubbed his hands with joy. "Ah, ah! my little Schwartz, and all your harpy tribe,—no more of your patent coffins and whales' blubber!—no more of your fifteen per cents!—A brave invention this gunpowder for poor cousins and younger brothers! I am not the only one this day who will blot out his tears with a long rent-roll. However, I want ready money, and if I cannot sell property, the sticks must come down; egad! I will not leave a gooseberry-bush standing; but the first thing is to bag my hare."

Ordering his cabriolet, he drove to Mr. Botts's office, and directed him to desire Mr. Thorp to deliver up all deeds, papers, and documents belonging to the Milton estates, and to acquaint Lady Milton, that it was his intention to take immediate possession, and give her notice to quit within the shortest possible period allowed by law. Such were the extent of Sir Alfred Milton's incumbrances, so immense was the ammount of his debts, that it was determined, as soon as pos-

sible, to pay these off by the sale of a portion of the estates, if possible, or at all events, by cutting down as much timber as would cover the required exigencies. A person was therefore sent down to Milton to survey the woods and park. The rents were directed to be screwed up to the highest pitch; and all arrears to be paid under penalty of levying and ejectment. The greater part of the noble oaks and elms, the most majestic and ornamental timber, was marked for the axe, whilst the library and old pictures were directed to be sent up to town for sale at Christie's.

The same post which announced to the wretched mother the loss of her only child, also brought with it the unfeeling notice from her nephew. It was fortunate, however, that her retirement, and the resolution she had formed of remaining the whole year at the sea-side, spared her the pain of being driven, as it were, from the shelter of that roof, of which, a few weeks previous, she had been the uncontrolled mistress; and from which

she was now dislodged, not by its passing into the hands of a kind and affectionate relative, who would have prided himself on shewing her all the respect due to her misfortunes, but into the very grasp of that cold-blooded wretch, who, if he was not the immediate author of her misery, at least had it in his power to have averted the evil by a single word.

Sir Alfred Milton's unfeeling conduct towards his aunt on this occasion (the world was ignorant of the rest) was not long, however, ere it drew down upon his head that odium which it so justly merited. Public opinion was not tardy in weighing and judging him, and he quickly perceived that he was deeply sunk in the opinion of all good men, and that stiff bows and formal recognitions met him on every side.

"D—n them!" said he to himself, "I could wring their stiff necks off; they feared and hated me when I was poor, and they shall cringe to me now that I am rich: if I were

to hang up a *casserole*, and announce a dinner twice a-week, they would soon flock after me."

The bitter cup of affliction, which had latterly been so often replenished, was again overflowing for the unhappy Lady Milton; yet, gladly as she would have sacrificed her own life to have averted the blow which left her childless, she felt some consolation in the mode of her son's death. He had died nobly, heroically, without pain or protracted suffering; and had he lived, remorse and lingering misery must have been his portion. His name would now be handed down with praise to future generations of his family; the hearts of the young men would beat with pride when tradition spoke of the valour of their ancestry. The old would forget his disobedience, his errors, in the history of his manifold virtues. The eyes of the maidens would weep when they heard of the tragic results of his attachment. His bravery would be a source of emulation! His integrity and honour would be a source

of pride! Whilst the fruits of his disobedience would be a warning to those, whose minds were bent upon the gratification of their own passions, in defiance of parental authority.

The only reply which Lady Milton requested Mr. Thorp to make to the heartless communication of the present possessor of Milton Park, was, that she merely demanded permission to revisit the spot once more, in order to deposit the remains of her son, near to those of his ancestors, in the family vault; a request having been forwarded immediately to Sidney, to direct the remains of his friend to be forwarded to his native country, which duty Sidney determined to take upon himself the instant the surgeons would permit him to undertake the voyage.

When sufficiently recovered to enter upon business, Sidney's first occupation was to devote himself to the perusal of the contents of the green case. By Herbert's will, he found himself, conjointly with Lord Seabridge,

appointed executor; annexed to this document was attached a short memoir, in Herbert's hand-writing, which contained an account of the various events which had recently occurred, with reference to the statement of his father. For the first time, the truth of this horrid affair was revealed to Sidney; when alternate sensations of pity, grief, and sympathy for his departed friend, astonishment at the incomprehensible conduct of the father, and disgust at the atrocity of the nephew, filled his mind.

"Yes!" exclaimed the young soldier, his whole frame shaking with rage and emotion —"I swore to protect and befriend your mother and Emily; I will do more! I will avenge them and you: the dastardly coward shall not escape me!" Then forgetting the loss he had suffered, and still fancying that he felt the warm life-blood circulating in his fingers, he made a violent effort, as if he would have struck the table with his hand: the pain, however, which this exertion caused

him, instantly brought him to his senses. "For the first time I begin to find out your value," said he, as he gazed upon the throbbing stump. "At the sight of a one-armed, mutilated man, the craven may find courage; for, by Heaven! I will expose him, strike him in the most public place in London, and the whole world shall know that it is not the first time he has been kicked and buffeted!"

It was not until the peace had been signed, and the British troops had broken up for various quarters of the globe, that Sidney's wound permitted him to perform the painful duty of conveying the remains of Herbert to England. At length he embarked on board a vessel bound for Plymouth, accompanied by Canteen and the poor dog. With the exception of Sidney and his attendants, there were but two other passengers on board, both elderly men; and from their sun-burnt and haggard features, their air of poverty, suffering, and misery, they had the appearance of persons

who had suffered severe hardships. Both, however, had the manners and air of gentlemen, especially the elder; but Sidney's thoughts were too much occupied with the events which had recently passed, to permit him to enter into conversation, or even to take much notice of his new companions. It was not until the morning of their second day's voyage, as Sidney was leaning over the side of the vessel watching the receding waves, that he was accosted by the elder of the two strangers.

"An unfortunate shot, Captain," said the man, pointing to Sidney's mutilated arm; "but with how much pride and admiration will those who love you look on your maimed limb!"

"I've heard of a tree being lopped, by way of improving its look," rejoined Sidney, "though I'm no admirer of such Dutch proceedings; but how the deuce chopping a man's arm off can produce that effect, Sir, I cannot conceive. It might be very pretty in

a romance, but I can assure you it is vastly disagreeable in reality. There, for instance," said Sidney, as the ship gave a heavy lurch, by which he was swung round, "there's the beauty of losing your arm: hang it! the stump went out as mechanically as if the hand were still dangling to it."

The stranger, who almost smiled at the officer's reply, answered, "There is certainly no reason, Sir, for such a feeling, nor is it just; yet one always gives credit to a man who has lost a limb, for possessing more valour than those who are entire. I remember, when I was a boy, I used to admire an old pensioner with his empty sleeve dangling at his button-hole, or his wooden stump clanking on the pavement, a hundred times more than your spruce, well-dressed officer, whom one saw strutting in all the pride of four limbs and fine dress."

"You must have constant opportunities of gratifying your taste, now in England, Sir," replied Sidney; "legs and arms are, I assure

you, not quite such common appendages to soldiers, as they used to be."

"True, Sir," rejoined the stranger, "for I understood, during the few hours I was in Bourdeaux, that this has been a long and bloody war; but now it is at an end, with what joy and happiness must you all return to the bosoms of your families, to the embraces of your parents, your wives, and children!" Here the stranger paused, and Sidney observed a tear steal down the withered and sun-burnt cheek of the old man.

"This is no common personage," said he to himself; "there is something interesting in his manner; I wonder what he can be. I will endeavour to draw from him his history."

"Yes, Sir, it will indeed be a scene of joy and rejoicing to many; but how many, also, are there who will have to deplore the loss of those who were dearest to them on earth!—how many childless, fatherless, and widowed, are now deploring their bereavement!"

"Better, Sir," answered the old man, "to die nobly, than to linger out a miserable existence in bondage. Better, Sir, to be carried home a laurelled corse, than to return childless, widowed, ruined in mind and body, and perhaps estate—your kindred perished, yourself forgotten, a stranger in your native land!" A cloud came across the brow of the stranger, and he turned to hide his emotion.

Sidney's interest and curiosity increased in proportion as the stranger continued his observations; it was clear that he was a man of education and unfortunate.

"You appear to speak feelingly, Sir; but I trust there are few such unhappy people in the world; and that you, at all events, are not of the number."

"*Allah akbar*, as the Mahomedans say," answered the stranger; and then, without replying immediately to Sidney's observation, he added, "I hear, Sir, from those on board, that the coffin below contains the remains of

a gallant gentleman, who fell in one of the late combats. May I venture to ask if he was a friend of yours?"

"My most intimate, my dearest friend," rejoined Sidney.

"I have been informed," answered the old man, "that his name was Milton—Herbert Milton? Will you forgive my curiosity, in inquiring if he was in any way related to a gentleman of that name, whom I remember in India some twenty years past?"

"His son, his only son," replied Sidney mournfully.

"His only son! astonishing!" answered the stranger. "Gracious Heaven, thy ways are inscrutable! Unhappy father! I pity you: I can feel for you. I, Sir, also have lost an only child."

"The father, Sir," returned Sidney, "is as far beyond the reach of joy or sorrow as the son."

"Dead, Sir! he also dead: then is he spared the corroboration of that event which tore

from him his daughter. Astonishing!" continued the stranger, "that Providence should thus have thrown into my very arms the remains of both his children."

Sidney's curiosity was now excited to the utmost: who could this man be, who appeared acquainted with facts unknown to all but himself?

"You speak of a daughter of the late Sir Herbert Milton; how, Sir, were you acquainted with the circumstances of his having a daughter."

"I know it, Sir, beyond a question; for that daughter perished in my arms, and the same waves which engulphed the body of my wife and child, devoured that also of Miss Milton:" and here the old man's emotion became extreme.

Without immediately betraying the existence of Helen Milton, Sidney answered, "I think, Sir, you are mistaken; the child you allude to lives, and is well known;" and the idea then came across his mind, that this man

might be an impostor, who, for some purpose or other, wished to invent a story which would procure him money.

"Impossible, Sir! That child breathed her last in these arms; I have a witness to the fact, in that unhappy man, the companion of my misfortunes; we are the only surviving wretches out of three hundred souls, who perished in one night! Their sufferings were short: mine, Sir, and those of my companion, have been prolonged during twenty years."

The earnest manner in which the old man spoke, his gentlemanly deportment, and the evidence which he offered to produce, made Sidney again dismiss the thought of his being an impostor. Determined, however, to satisfy his curiosity, he said—

"You have put one or two questions to me, in return you will not feel offended, I hope, at my inquiring if you were acquainted with Sir Herbert Milton?"

"I was not personally acquainted with that gentleman," replied the stranger, "but I

heard of him frequently during my residence in India; though, being myself a military man, I had no personal intercourse with him."

"And yet you say you were aware of the existence of his daughter?"

"My history, my adventures, are long and melancholy," replied the old man; "but in a few words I can give an explanation in answer to your question."

"Sir," said Sidney, "upon your answer depend the most extraordinary circumstances; I must urge you to be clear and explicit: I must therefore earnestly entreat you to disclose your name, and the whole of those facts, which in any way are connected with the daughter of Sir Herbert Milton."

"Willingly," rejoined the other. "My name is Mowbray; I was twenty years since a Captain in the East India Company's military service. Having by the death of my father, inherited his property, I determined to return to pass the rest of my life in

my native country; embarking for this purpose with my wife and only daughter on board the —— Indiaman. Our voyage promised to be prosperous, but ere it was half completed, our vessel caught fire; the crew and passengers took to the boats, and that poor man and myself alone escaped to suffer twenty years of slavery and torment."

"Are you not aware?" answered Sidney, "that there were other survivors from the burning vessel besides yourself?"

"Cut off from all intercourse with the world, imprisoned, or rather enchained in the deserts of Africa, we have known nothing; and six weeks have scarcely elapsed since we have enjoyed the blessings of liberty."

"But the child, Sir, the child!" exclaimed Sidney; "what of the child?"

"Before we finally quitted India, our vessel touched at —— for passengers: amongst these, Sir, were two nurses, both natives, with an infant, which particularly attracted the attention of myself and wife, from its

extraordinary resemblance to our own child —so extraordinary indeed that it was even a matter of difficulty to ascertain the distinction between the two; and it was often a cause of mirth and amusement to the passengers, when the two innocents were playing in the cuddy. The name of the parents of this child were at first unknown."

A ray of hope shot across the mind of Sidney—"Good heavens! if it should prove to be a mistake; and yet it cannot be; though, if it were—alas! it is now too late!"

"This, Sir, is a matter of such extreme import, perhaps even to yourself, that you must excuse me if I question the possibility of an occurrence likely to affect a fact which the late Sir Herbert Milton appears to have placed beyond all doubt. His daughter it was, Sir, who was saved. I have the proofs at this moment with me on board."

The stranger caught at these words, and exclaimed, "Gracious Providence! should it be so,—then, indeed, shall I be thankful for

the life thou hast spared!" And turning to Sidney, he added, "I also have the proofs of that child having perished. Listen to me, Sir. During the scene of dreadful confusion which existed, in consequence of the fire, as the people were placed in the boats, I rushed into the cabin, rolled up my child as I imagined in a blanket, and placed it in safety in its mother's arms in the boat;—but judge of my horror, Sir, as the subsequent day dawned upon us, when I found I had abandoned my own infant and rescued that of Mr. Milton! the fatal resemblance having deceived me. My agonies, and those of my wife, on this discovery, were indeed dreadful; though hers were of short duration, for grief, sorrow, and fatigue, put an end to her existence in a few hours; and Mr. Milton's infant survived but a short time."

"What proof have you, Sir," demanded Sidney, "that the delusion which you say almost deceived you upon first seeing the

infants together might not have misled you at the last?"

"The strongest proofs. Said you not Sir Herbert's daughter lived? say you not she was saved?"

"I did, Sir," replied Sidney: "but allow me to ask, if you consider the proofs in your possession such as would hold good before a court of justice."

"Undoubtedly!" replied the other. "In the first place, the dress of my own infant, the ornaments she wore, if she were indeed saved, are now fresh in my memory: whilst here, Sir, is that which was suspended round the neck of Mr. Milton's child," and he drew from his breast a small tarnished and battered locket. Opening the spring, the words "E—— M——, born at ——, 10th January, 1793," were visible. "If this were not sufficient, Sir," continued Mr. Mowbray, "I can prove that the locket of my own infant was marked E. M., the same letters were engraved

upon it; and if she were in existence, the bite of a reptile on her left foot would sufficiently prove her identity. That gentleman," added he, "can bear witness to the truth of my assertions. He was second officer of the unfortunate vessel. Here are our certificates from the Consul at Tunis; here those of the authorities at Marseilles; and here the proofs of our escape from slavery, through the benevolence of a Jewish trader; who, without hope of reward or repayment, purchased our ransom, clothed, fed, and protected us, and gave us the means of throwing ourselves on the French Consul, who, with not less humanity, ordered us a passage in a vessel bound to France."

We must pass over the remainder of these important communications, which had thus brought to light facts, which, it appeared to Sidney, were incontrovertible arguments in favour of the possibility of Ellen Milton being in reality the daughter of Mr. Mowbray; though, if that were the case, it was evident that

Sir Herbert himself must have been deceived by the resemblance between the children; and it was with a heart expanding with a melancholy hope of doing justice to the memory of his friend—all that now remained to be done—that he resolved, in conjunction with Lord Seabridge, to take immediate advice of counsel, and leave no means untried to prove that the pretensions of Mr. Mowbray were well founded. Ere they reached the end of their voyage, Sidney, who had no doubt in his own mind, from the facts communicated by Mr. Mowbray, that the lamented remains on board were really those of his son-in-law, and that it was his daughter who was now known as the young Lady Milton, acquainted the old gentleman with her melancholy state, its causes, and, in fact, every circumstance attending her affecting history.

CHAPTER XII.

On Captain Sidney's arrival at Plymouth, he determined to perform those duties to the remains of his friend, and that justice to his wretched wife and mother, which he had solemnly sworn to fulfil, ere he himself proceeded to gratify the impatience he felt to see his destined bride. To prevent delay, he had occupied himself during the voyage in taking down the depositions of Mr. Mowbray and his companion, to which both gentlemen made affidavit on their disembarkation at Plymouth. To these Sidney added all those Milton papers which had any reference to this unhappy subject, and despatched the whole to Lord Seabridge the moment he landed; strongly urging his lordship not to lose an instant in taking the opinions of the most eminent counsel, and in ascertaining the measures necessary to be pursued by

themselves, as executors to their friend, and trustees to the young Lady Milton, of whose legitimacy he now entertained no doubt. To Lady Milton and Mrs. Walden, Sidney also despatched an express, not only to prepare them for his arrival, but acquainting them with the extraordinary and unexpected facts which had been brought to light. Having made every necessary arrangement for the conducting of the funeral procession, he hastened with Mr. Mowbray to the residence of Lady Milton at Teignmouth, whilst the naval officer proceeded direct to London, to present himself at the India House.

On the arrival of the travellers, they had the gratification to learn, that by the judicious measures adopted, the mind of the unhappy Emily had been in a great degree restored, so that by prudently withholding from her for a time the intelligence of Sir Herbert's death, they had at length the happiness to find her so composed, as to be capable of sustaining the gradual disclosure of every

circumstance relating to her extraordinary history, as now detailed by her undoubted parent.

Sir Alfred Milton, for so he styled himself, was for the present kept in ignorance of the proceedings that were in operation against him; until Sidney and Lord Seabridge were enabled to come upon him in such a decisive manner as must at once force him to relinquish all claim to the property of his cousin, or drive him to trial in open court. In the mean time the two friends were indefatigable in their exertions; the identity of Mr. Mowbray and the second officer of the Indiaman was confirmed by fifty witnesses, and indeed the former took possession of his patrimonial property, which had been most justly and honourably administered by a younger brother, to whom it had descended. It was the unanimous opinion of the highest legal authorities who were consulted on this occasion, that the evidence direct and circumstantial was so conclusive as to set aside all

doubt as to the legitimacy or rather identity of Emily as Mr. Mowbray's daughter; and establishing the consequent right of the trustees to the administration of the estates in trust for the now young Lady Milton, until the issue of that event, which was now hailed with as much joy and expectation, as it had previously been anticipated with horror, should determine Alfred Milton's claims to the estates and title. It was determined to offer to the latter the choice of proceeding to immediate trial, or of quietly awaiting the result of this important event; but in the mean time an injunction was prayed for from the Chancellor (into whose Court the affairs were thrown), to put a stop to the havoc which was being committed by Alfred at Milton Park: where, although he had not appeared at the funeral, he was known to be superintending the destruction which was now carrying on upon the timber. And he having thus settled all legal matters, Sidney resolved no longer to delay his determination of calling

Alfred also to a personal account for his conduct.

"She may have a daughter," said Sidney to himself, "and then the scoundrel would laugh at us all; no! come what will, I will abide by my words; I swore to avenge you, Herbert, and my oath shall be sacred: if Seabridge will not accompany me, I will find another second. Egad! perhaps old Mowbray would be the fittest person after all, and if I mistake not, I must look sharp, or the old gentleman will be there before me, he dropt something like a hint of his determination this morning."

With this intention he called upon his brother trustee, and at once communicated his intentions, earnestly requesting Lord Seabridge would accompany him immediately to Milton Park, where Mr. Thorp and Lord Seabridge's solicitor were both to go down, in order to serve the notices and injunctions upon Alfred, and to make him the proposition of quietly abiding the event, on which

depended the realization or destruction of his hopes.

"I hate quarrels and duels as much as any man breathing," said Sidney to the young nobleman, "but I consider this as a sacred and holy duty, bequeathed to me by my unhappy friend. I swore to perform it when we parted for the last time, and I solemnly renewed my oath over the bleeding body—murdered, as it were, by that villain!"

"Though I applaud your motives," answered Lord Seabridge, "I cannot approve your intentions. Leave him to the law, Harry; he will be sufficiently punished by the destruction of his infamous schemes, and by his public exposure. If he has a grain of feeling, a spark of shame, he can never shew himself again in London."

"We know that he possesses neither," replied Sidney; "and I will fairly tell you, Seabridge, that I am not come to ask advice, but to request your attendance. He has blood

to answer for, and by that blood I swear, that his life or mine shall atone for it!"

"Remember," answered the young nobleman, "that you have a paramount duty which you owe to my cousin Mary; think of her, my dear Sidney; should any thing fatal occur to you—"

"Do not suppose," rejoined the other, "that I am insensible to that. No, no, Seabridge; I confess that the thoughts of dear Mary make the effort, perhaps the sacrifice, still greater; yet such is my opinion of her noble spirit, that, did I dare communicate my purpose to her, I feel convinced she would applaud, though she might tremble at my determination."

"At all events wait until he comes up to town; a few days' farther consideration may induce you to abandon your intentions."

"All argument is useless. Will you accompany me? if your answer is in the affirmative, I shall look upon it as a lasting favour. I may require your cool head to keep my hot

brain in order. If you resolve on the negative, I shall not feel offended: but at all events," added Sidney, seriously, "should any thing happen to me, console poor Mary."

"By heaven!" exclaimed Lord Seabridge, "if any thing should happen to you, he shall next try his skill on me. I shall feel myself called upon to take your place, and since horse-whipping is the order of the day, I shall perhaps try what I can effect in that way.—Hang the rascal! I confess the very thought of him makes my peaceable blood boil in my veins—but say no more; I will accompany you. In the mean time, you had better communicate your purpose to my uncle; it is a duty you at least owe to him."

To this Sidney assented, and the hearty old fox-hunter, who had been made acquainted with all the previous circumstances, expressed more regret than surprise upon hearing the resolution of his intended son-in-law.

Warmly shaking Sidney by the hand, Mr. Dropmore exclaimed, "By George! you are

a brave and good fellow, Harry—you are worthy of my girl;—but, hang it! it will break her heart and mine too, if you should come to any harm."

"We must not think of that, Sir," replied Sidney, with more solemnity and consideration than he usually displayed; "I trust that Providence, which has thus far rendered me in some measure instrumental in the clearing up of this horrid business, will watch over and protect me—were it but for Mary's sake."

Mr. Dropmore, who had always admired Sidney for his judgment in horses, and the gallant style in which he put them across country, was now more proud of him than ever, and he exclaimed, "A man, Henry, who could ride as I have seen you do, must be a brave one—all the world knows it. I say again, it will break our hearts to lose you—and hang him! leave him to be worried by the lawyers—he is rank dunghill, he won't fight—he'll only take the law of you."

"Then he shall take a good kicking with it," answered the other.

"Kicking!" replied Mr. Dropmore, "d—n the cur! he no more minds kicking than a tired horse cares for a broken spur!"

"Then, Sir, he shall have enough of it. Jackson can tell you that I can hit pretty hard with my left, and if he will not fight he shall feel. However, Sir, we are off this evening, solicitors and all; in three days you shall hear from me, and next Monday week, I hope, by the blessing of God, to call dear Mary my own; in the mean time do not betray me to Lady Ann, or your daughter."

"If you are determined, Harry," answered Mr. Dropmore, "why there is no use in my attempting to argue with you upon the subject; all I can do, is to hope that you will run the fellow to ground, though he is not worth the powder. The lawyers are the only proper match for him."

Thus did Mr. Dropmore endeavour to deter Sidney from his purpose, but without success;

and in a few hours the two young men left London, and proceeded into Devonshire, where they were to be joined by their solicitors. Upon their arrival at the village near the Park, they found the sign which was attached to the Inn (the Milton Arms,) decorated with black crape; and indeed, such was the general feeling of unfeigned regret at the death of their young landlord, that most of the shops were half-closed, and scarcely a farmer was seen without some symbol of mourning attached to his apparel. Here they were joined by the gentlemen of the law, and the whole party, leaving their carriages at the village, proceeded on foot across the Park to the hall; where, upon inquiring for Mr. Milton, and Mr. Botts, they were informed that the one was occupied in the Park superintending the fall of timber, and that the other was employed in the library auditing the accounts of the tenantry. Leaving the gentlemen of the law to perform their duty, we will follow Sidney and his friend. During the few

moments they remained in the house, they cast a glance towards the interior of the mansion, where they perceived every thing in disorder. Workmen were busily employed in packing up books and pictures; those even of the family, painted by Vandyke, Lely, and Kneller, being equally condemned to the hammer with the productions of the Italian and Flemish schools; whilst the full length portrait of poor Herbert, by Lawrence, taken from its frame, was cast carelessly aside, and appeared destined for sale or destruction.

"Profligate, unfeeling scoundrel!" exclaimed Sidney, whose blood boiled within him at the sight of this indignity offered to the image of his friend, "that alone would have been sufficient to make me desire to shoot him. It was high time for us to interfere; had we delayed much longer, there would have been nothing left to take charge of."

Having ascertained the spot where they were likely to meet Alfred, the two friends now proceeded in their search. Though far

advanced in the month of May, the afternoon was wet, gloomy, and drizzling. One of those damp and dense fogs so common in that part of England, hung like a shroud over the landscape, and concealed the summit of the hills; the different mountain streams rattled down the sides of the declivities, increasing the volume of the great fall, which sprang through the Dead Man's Dance, with the roar of distant thunder; casting up clouds of mist and vapour which entirely concealed the woods above, and the bridge which united the two rocky jaws of the chasm. In short, it was one of those cold ungenial days, which often appear on those occasions, when the melancholy nature of one's occupation or thoughts require all the invigorating warmth of the sun's brightest beams to encourage, rather than a lowering and clouded sky to augment the depression of one's spirits. After a search of some duration, Sidney and Lord Seabridge were at length directed by one of the woodmen to the grounds beyond the fall. Having

crossed the bridge, under which the vast body of water flung itself down with terrific violence, causing the very rocks on which reposed the buttresses to vibrate, they perceived Alfred descending the road which conducted immediately towards them. The ground being too slippery to ride, he had sent home his horse, and was returning towards the mansion on foot. By the perpetual reverberation of the axes which re-echoed on every side; it was evident that the most rapid destruction was being carried on amidst the magnificent timber, which for centuries had adorned the park; and to judge by the vacant spaces, it seemed as if Alfred Milton, revelling in his mischief, had chosen as his victims the most ornamental and majestic trees which could be found. Occupied with his own meditations, it was not until the gentlemen were within a few yards of his person, that he was aware of their approach. He started, stared for a moment, the colour mounted into his cheeks; retaining his hands, which were thrust into

the pockets of his great coat, in the same position, he coldly bowed to Lord Seabridge, and said, "To what accident am I indebted for the unexpected honour of seeing your Lordship in my grounds? my private walks, my Lord, are not, I believe, within the range of your free warren?"

Before Lord Seabridge could offer any reply, Sidney stepped forward, and answered, "Your questions, Sir, if you have any to make, must be addressed to me; I have business here, not only as the trustee and friend of the late Sir Herbert Milton, but as the mortal enemy of him whom I consider as his murderer! Ay," added Sidney, regarding Alfred with a look of contempt and anger, "you may well turn pale—murderer—to your very teeth!"

Alfred did, indeed, become pale; so little was he prepared for this sudden rencontre, that even his ready spirit was at a loss for an immediate answer, whilst Lord Seabridge followed up Sidney's words, by observing, "and

I, Mr. Milton, shall inform you that my presence here is perfectly legal also, though perhaps our immediate business with you is of a nature whose results must be hereafter left to the decision of the law."

"My Lord," answered Alfred, recovering his coolness and presence of mind, "I do not comprehend by what *legal* right either you or this person can presume to trespass and insult me on my own grounds."

"That, Sir, will be explained on your arrival at the hall," replied Sidney, hastily; "my business here is entirely of a personal nature, and I suppose you will not again shrink?"

"From you, certainly not!" retorted Alfred, interrupting him with an air of disdain; and then turning to Lord Seabridge, he added, "My Lord, your appearance here is an enigma, although, if I understand you right, you are here as the friend of that person."

"I am, Sir, and joint trustee of these estates," returned Lord Seabridge.

"If the object of your visit is of a personal

nature," rejoined Alfred, "I must beg to put it to your Lordship, whether this is the usual mode of arranging such matters between gentlemen; and as to your being a trustee, I am quite at a loss to understand your meaning. What right have you, my Lord, and how dare you thus intrude upon my privacy in this abrupt and extraordinary manner?"

"I grant you, Mr. Milton, that our appearance may be somewhat abrupt and unwelcome; but there are circumstances which may sometimes excuse a deviation from established rules."

"Nothing, my Lord, can excuse any deviation from that line of conduct which is prescribed as the medium of communication between gentlemen. I am little surprised at that hot-brained young gentleman committing this outrage; but, it is indeed, a matter of astonishment, that your Lordship should be found aiding and abetting in this extraordinary aggression."

"Our right to appear on these grounds,

Sir," answered Lord Seabridge, "is greater than you are at present aware of. On your return to the house, this enigma, as you term it, will be explained; you will there find yourself served with notices and injunctions, and a discovery awaits you, which will probably cause greater surprise than the conduct which you attribute to me; but, in the name of my friend, I once more declare, that our business in thus seeking you is entirely personal, and requires little consideration, though I must fairly inform you, that you are no longer master here."

"And never will be, I fervently hope!" exclaimed Sidney. "Come, Seabridge," added he, "the time is now past for all trifling or mystery. Tell him at once, that we are the trustees to the widow of his cousin, his legitimate widow; that we are here backed by the authority of the Lord Chancellor; and, in short, that I am come to demand satisfaction for the base treachery which has brought despair, madness, and mourning, upon those

whom it was his duty to have supported, as it is now mine to avenge."

It was evident, from Alfred Milton's countenance that he was extremely agitated; but casting a look of contempt at Sidney, he controlled his feelings, and replied; "My Lord, and you, Sir, whose tongue appears to have gained in proportion to the extent of loss you have suffered in your other members—this is really putting my patience to rather too severe a test. Quit these premises, gentlemen, forthwith!" added Alfred, with considerable energy of voice and manner, "or you will oblige me to call in the assistance of some of my people. It is not by such conduct that you, my Lord, give proofs of your discretion, or you, Sir, of your courage."

During this conversation, the three gentlemen had gradually descended the green drive, and had arrived at the spot where the road branched in two directions, the one conducting straight by the precipitous margin of the dingle towards the village, and the other turn-

ing across the bridge which stretched itself over the torrent. It was a wild and romantic spot, and on a fine day commanded the most beautiful and varied prospects; but the evening was now drawing in, a dense and heavy mist hung over the scenery, which combined with the vapour arising in volumes from the cataract, completely veiled even the neighbouring park from sight. Above their heads the trees, shaken by the gusts of wind, cast down the moisture which clung to their foliage in momentary showers; whilst the little rills which usually trickled down the declivities, perceptible only by their gentle sound amidst the pebbles, now rushed down in mimic cataracts, rendering the close greensward of the drive not only extremely moist, but so slippery as to require considerable caution in walking. Beneath their feet the angry torrent roared and lashed in furious grandeur, as it eddied and bubbled for awhile in its foaming cauldron, and then leaped frothing and braying over the rocky ledge; whilst

its roar was increased by the rumbling and rustling of the fragments of stone and pebbles which the swollen water-courses brought down from the mountains and plunged into the gulf beneath. It was at this spot that Alfred drew up, and pointing to the road which conducted to the village, he said, "That, gentlemen, is your nearest path to quit these grounds. If you have legal demands on me, let them be produced in a legal manner; if you have personal differences which require explanation, seek those explanations in a mode suited to your station in life, and you will not find me backward in affording you ample satisfaction: but, my Lord, I will not submit to be waylaid and bullied."

"I am not come here to trifle," replied Sidney, whose temper was becoming at every instant more violent;—"No, Sir! though I have no longer the advantage of possessing all my limbs, yet this which remains will serve my purpose. I shall even be enabled to ascertain if the sight of a one-armed man

can inspire you with more courage than you possessed some weeks past in the library,—you understand me; but no more, Sir: your cousin's blood is on your head, and I am here to avenge him!"

"Really, Sir Knight Errant," replied Alfred, endeavouring to conceal his violent agitation, "you appear to have lost your arm and your senses together. I had yet to learn that an officer in the Guards could identify himself with a common footpad; and do you, my Lord, look upon it as creditable to your rank or character, thus to assist in so gross an outrage? However, to adopt your own expressions, there are circumstances which warrant a man in departing from established rules, and I warn you, that unless you both retire forthwith, I shall exercise my authority as a magistrate, and commit you for a breach of the peace."

"If you have an atom of spirit in your veins," exclaimed Sidney, "you will consent to give me satisfaction within an hour!—we

will await you here;—if you refuse, I shall be obliged to renew the experiment by which your unhappy cousin endeavoured to arouse your courage."

"By Heavens! this is too much," answered Alfred, whose usual calmness and self-possession was fast yielding to the most violent passion: "this conduct is too outrageous and ungentlemanly. Your insinuation is a vile and atrocious calumny!"

"It is true! true as the light of Heaven!" rejoined Sidney; "you were kicked, buffeted, and spit upon, and you would now screen yourself beneath the protection of the law!"

Want of courage had, however, never been a failing in Alfred's character; his having endured what he had done from Herbert was not the result of cowardice, but calculation: for he too well knew how deeply he should be revenged. Enraged to the highest pitch of fury by Sidney's expressions, and losing all farther control over himself, he roared out—

"'Tis false, villain! and the loss of your arm shall no longer protect you!" Then seizing the heavy hunting-whip which hung over his arm, he sprung forward, and aimed a violent blow at the head of Sidney. With considerable agility, the latter jumped aside, and escaped the stroke; whilst such was the force with which Alfred had directed his blow, so violent was the effort he made to concentrate his whole force upon Sidney, that suddenly losing his balance, his foot slipped, and he reeled against the rustic fence which protected the margin of the chasm. The light and as it appeared rotten structure, yielded to the force of his body, and ere Lord Seabridge or Sidney could spring to his rescue, he fell headlong down the steep. A ledge of rock halfway down the descent arrested his fall; he grasped with desperate energy with one hand the edge of the stone, and with the other the branch of a shrub which protruded from a crevice; but not only did the fragile plant give way, but the fragment of granite on

which he lay, being loosened by the previous rains and this unusual pressure, yielded to his weight. For a moment there was heard a rustling; then a faint scream, followed by the loud reverberation of the rocky fragment as it plunged into the chasm; one additional cloud of vapour arose, and all was again silent, save the roaring of the cataract. Petrified with horror and surprise at this instantaneous and awful accident, Sidney and Lord Seabridge stood for some seconds in mute terror and astonishment, until they were aroused, by seeing the body of the wretched Alfred whirled, tossed, and driven from side to side by the raging eddies of the fall—they saw his hand once lifted up in the very throes of death, ere he disappeared, carried with the speed of light over the rocky barrier of the Dead Man's Dance!

As it may be the wish of our readers to have some further account of the fate which yet awaited the most prominent personages who have appeared in this history, we will

endeavour to satisfy their curiosity in as few words as possible.

Young Lady Milton on finally regaining her reason was consoled in some small degree for her loss by the discovery of her father, who now took up his abode constantly with her, and by the birth of a son and heir, to whose care and education she has devoted the remainder of her days. She has not quitted Milton Park since the period of her first removal to its walls, her whole time being employed in watching over her son, and in dispersing in acts of charity the noble fortune of which she is in possession.

To judge by the gentlemanly manners, noble countenance, and intelligent expression of the young Sir Mowbray Milton, whom we saw and distinguished last election-Monday amongst the many joyous faces assembled in the upper school-room, preparatory to their temporary escape from the discipline of the worthy doctor, the heir to Milton Park bids fair to rival his father in the graces of his person and perfections of his mind.

Canteen, having served one-and-twenty years, is discharged and pensioned, and established as gate-keeper at one of the lodges at Milton; whence he may be seen frequently crossing the Park towards the mansion, with a stiff and erect person, under pretence of paying a visit to his young master, but, in fact, to have a gossip in the steward's-room; where, as his days become shorter, his stories and potations are considerably increased in length and profundity.

The poor Corporal, worn out with age, has followed his unfortunate master to the tomb. His picture adorns the great hall of the mansion, whilst a monument raised to his memory in a shady corner of Lady Milton's flower-garden, records his fidelity and services. The Dowager Lady Milton, Mrs. Walden, and Mr. Mowbray, constantly reside with their daughter and occupy themselves in assisting her in those acts of charity, which render the whole party adored and respected through the country.

Harry Sidney, the kind and generous Sid-

ney, and his no less noble-minded kinsman, are both married, and have met with that continued happiness which their amiable qualities so richly merited. The fatal scenes to which Sidney had been witness, together with the example of his lovely and gentle Mary, have sobered much of the vivacity of his character; and though he is still remarkable for his good-humour and gaiety, yet it would be difficult to recognise in the staid and quiet Colonel Sidney the wild Ensign whom we first introduced to our readers at Harwich. The Baroness continues to retain all her animation and attachment to music: her parties are the best in London, and she the life and soul of her agreeable *réunions*.

The sudden fate of Alfred (which by-the-bye, it is necessary to state, was satisfactorily accounted for before the coroner by the evidence, not only of the two principal witnesses, but by several of the woodmen, who were within a few yards of the spot), placed Lady Catesby in complete security, and if she does not continue to flirt as much as usual, the

fault does not rest with her. Time, strong and violent passion, and the improved taste of the day, have diminished her admirers; and with the exception of a worn-out beau, or some boy just entered into the Life Guards, she may be seen in her box at the Opera sitting alone for hours.

Sir James Epsom is still looking forward to win the Derby, and Lady Maria is still deep in scientific researches. Sir Harry Sneerwell's sullenness is not a whit softened by age, and he continues to be the terror of all the young, and not a few of the old who pass St. James's Street. The Ladies Bossville are still the Ladies Bossville, though they have absolutely reduced their pretensions to younger brothers, and even to common squires. Bob Painter, who had many years enjoyed a pension from Lady Milton, could only be induced to quit Portsmouth upon one occasion, which was the christening of Sir Mowbray Milton. In despite, however, of the floods of ale, and the good cheer and attention he met with, he seemed to be out of his element, and occupied

his whole time in new rigging the pleasure-boat which floated on the lake. He was excessively indignant at the lubber who had performed this operation in the first instance, swearing the craft was trimmed too much by the head; that she was heavy, and tawt rigged; in short, that she was no more fit to sail than she was to walk on dry land. He gave her, however, a thorough overhaul, set her completely to rights, and when his task was finished, declared she had just, for all the world, the cut of the Victory's tender; and for all she was but a nut-shell, he should not mind, with half-a-dozen hands, "what he could name," making a dash with her into any of the harbours on the French coast.

THE END.

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Hudson, Marianne Spencer Stanhope,

Almack's a novel

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